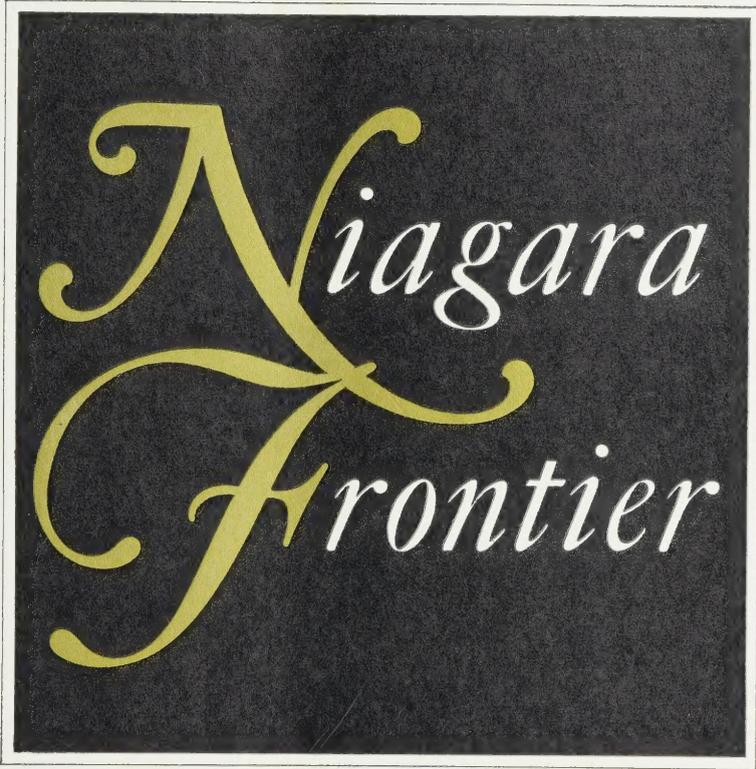


*Spring 1964*



*Niagara  
Frontier*

BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Niagara Frontier

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## CONTENTS

AN ORIGINAL NARRATIVE OF THE NIAGARA CAMPAIGN OF 1814

INTRODUCTION

*by John T. Horton*

The present issue of our journal is one of two intended to mark the third joint Canadian-American observance of the sesquicentennial of the War of 1812 and 150 years of peace on the Niagara Frontier. In 1962 in Buffalo and in 1963 in Toronto, formal luncheon ceremonies were held, sponsored by the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society and the Toronto Historical Board, with the May-

ors and other leading officials of both cities participating. In 1964, on July 26, commemorating especially the Battle of Lundy's Lane on July 25, 1814, another joint observance is being conducted at Fort George and Old Fort Niagara, with added participation by the New York State Commission on Observance of the Sesquicentennial of the War of 1812.



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You are welcome to membership in the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society whatever your interests may be, whether as reader, collector, writer or simply as a believer in our work. We shall be happy to hear from you; you may call TR 3-9644 for further information.

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# An Original Narrative of the Niagara Campaign of 1814

Introduction by John T. Horton

THE following narrative is drawn from a series of Lectures appearing in *The Historical Magazine*, (Volume II, Third Series) in 1873. The author, David Bates Douglass, sometime Major of Engineers in the United States Army, had died in 1849. His children, finding the lectures among his effects, eventually submitted them to the *Magazine* for publication. They had been first delivered in 1840 before the Mercantile Library Association of New York City. Revised, they were delivered in the winter of 1845 before the Young Men's Association of Albany; and repeated in the Assembly Chamber at the Capitol at the request of many members of both Houses of the Legislature. The lectures apparently attained a reputation, for they were delivered again the same year, this time in New Haven before the Young Men's Institute. Not long before his death Douglass read them also in Buffalo. They constitute a vivid account of the campaign along the Niagara Frontier in the summer of 1814; and from the morrow of the Battle of Chippawa through the action at Lundy's Lane, the American retreat to Fort Erie and the unsuccessful British siege of that Fort.

The narrative, to be sure, is not contemporaneous with the events it describes. The author, however, was only in his sixtieth year when he died suddenly of a stroke; and at the time of his death was Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at what is now called Hobart College. Moreover, when he first prepared the lectures he was only about fifty. The campaign of 1814 was twenty six years in the past; as he himself admits, he was "very young, at the epoch of that campaign;" and he did check his recollection of events with recourse to the dispatches "of the different commanders written at the moment. . . ." It is a fair inference, therefore, that the story he tells is a reasonably accurate one.

In 1840, the same year as that in which he first delivered his lectures, Douglass became President of Kenyon College in Ohio. Though as a college President he was hardly successful, his activities in that office had been preceded by others more distinguished. In 1815 he had become an Assistant Professor of Natural Philosophy at West Point; and at the same place in due course he occupied the chairs of Mathematics and Engineering. In the early 30's he joined the staff of New York University where he was Professor of Civil Engineering and Architecture. The University's new building in Washington Square was of his design. Douglass's biggest job was as engineer (1834-36) for the Commission to supply New York City with water. Numerous engagements as a consulting engineer on other projects, both public and private, had already led him in 1831 to resign from the army.

Douglass, just graduated from Yale, had joined the army eighteen years before in 1813, and though Yale had disappointed him in his quest for engineering knowledge, he had been commissioned almost immediately as a Second Lieutenant of Engineers and ordered to West Point. It was thence that he was ordered to the Niagara Frontier. His conduct there under fire in the defense of Fort Erie won him commendation in the dispatches of General Gaines, promotion to the rank of First Lieutenant and by brevet to Captain. He remembered these stirring days with pleasure and nostalgia. The following narrative is evidence of that, as is also one of the author's prefatory remarks in the opening lecture. Lamenting the dearth of materials at his disposal on the War of 1812, he said:

"The substantial matter must be drawn chiefly from personal sources; and these, I am grieved to say, are everyday becoming fewer and fewer. Even now, I look round me in vain, for the groups of gallant men with whom it was my privilege

to be associated, in the Niagara Army. Of the Engineer Corps of that army, I am the only survivor; and of the chosen circle to the number of twenty, from various Corps—kindred spirits, who used, nightly, to assemble at the Engineer mess-room, at Fort Erie—only two or three remain. To my mind's eye, indeed, I find it not difficult to recall, at pleasure, the living, breathing forms and lineaments of my old comrades and friends; but to my corporeal sense, they are gone."

One may be sure that the following narration gave pleasure to its author as well as to its several audiences.

You remember that, previous to the year 1814, Great Britain had sustained the War in Canada simultaneously with her vast military operations on the Continent of Europe; but that the pacification of Europe, in the early part of that year, putting an end to those operations, enabled her to withdraw a portion of the force, thus employed, and direct it against us.

Early in the month of May, the advance of these reinforcements, having been embarked directly from Bordeaux, began to arrive in Canada; and, by the opening of the Niagara Campaign, several Regiments of these and other veteran troops, relieved from duty in the lower Provinces, were in rapid movement towards the frontier. The possession of Fort Niagara, the successful incursion of the preceding Winter, and the consequent depopulation of that border, naturally suggested it as a vulnerable point, proper for the commencement of a more formidable invasion; and such would, undoubtedly, have been the policy of the enemy, had the frontier been found unoccupied in force, or less obstinately contested than it was.

Such are the reflections suggested by the state of things, in the early part of the month of June. The opening of the Campaign was then daily expected; and, in the retirement of West Point—not yet having received my orders—I began to fear that my anticipations of service, in that quarter, were not to be realized. At length, however, after a long and tedious interval, on the sixteenth of that month, they came to hand;

and I was directed to proceed, forthwith, with the Company under my command, and join the North-western Army, under Major-general Brown.

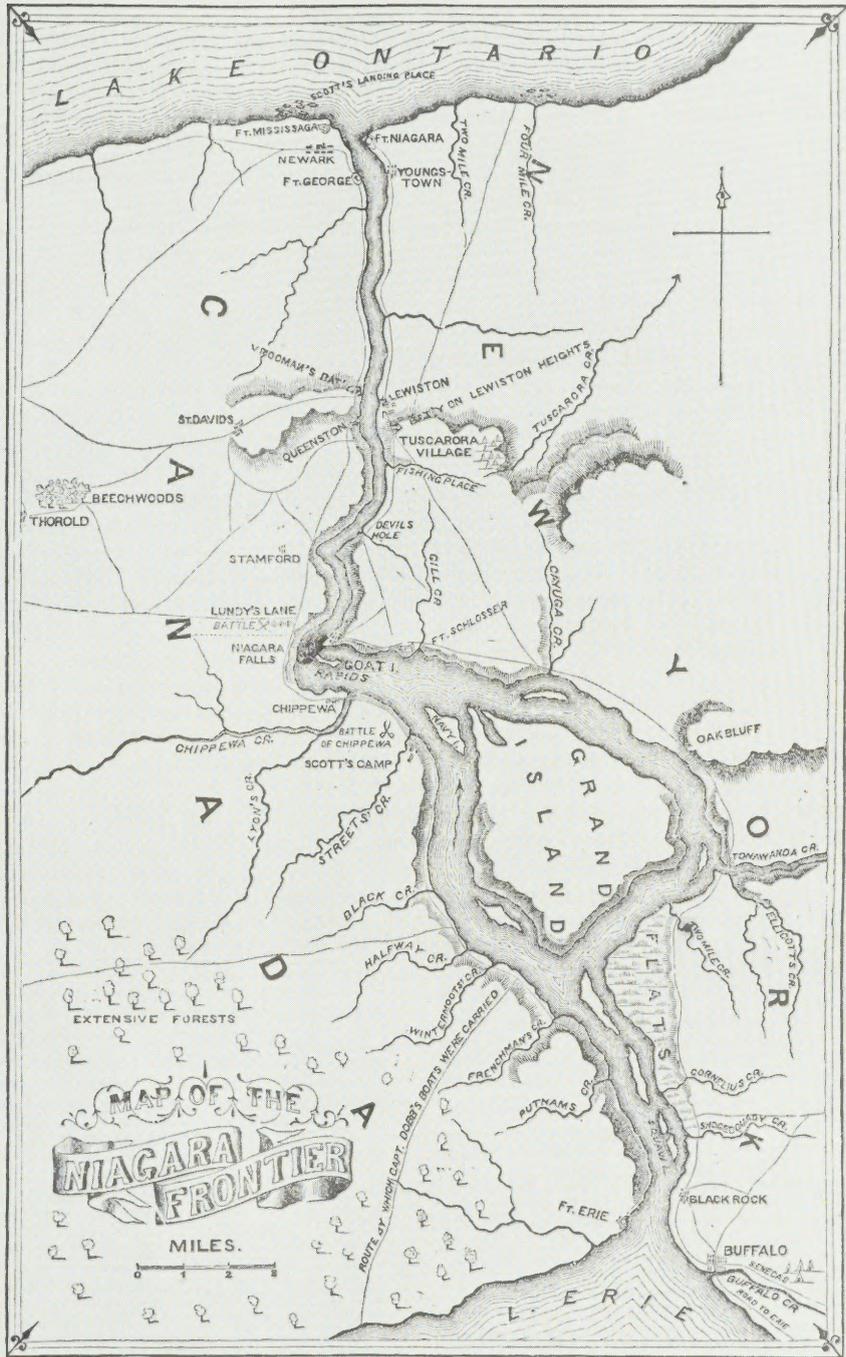
The Company was taken entirely by surprise. The intended movement had been carefully concealed from them, lest some traverse interest should be made to prevent the issuing of the Order. It did operate rather hardly upon them. They had been recruited under an impression, totally unauthorized, that they would remain, permanently, at West Point; some of them, it turned out, had even enlisted to avoid Militia draft for the lines; more than half of them were married; and all quietly barracked, at the Point, as they supposed, for the year to come, at least. The Order came among them with the suddenness of a supernatural visitation. But it is due to them to say, that they behaved well, on the occasion. They were, in reality, as fine a set of men as the service could boast; and when recovered from their first surprise, united, with hearty good will, in the arrangements for their departure. Within fifteen minutes after the publication of the Order, I had their knapsacks spread out on Parade, for inspection; and, in little more than an hour, they were drawn up, at the public store, to receive their extra supplies. The Order was published at the drum-head, on the sixteenth, at eleven o'clock; and, on the nineteenth, at evening, all our adieus had been made, and we embarked, under a parting salute, for Albany.\*

A slow sailing-craft passage, up the river, delayed us until the twenty-fifth, in leaving Albany; but, after that, our progress, no longer retarded by adverse winds or tides, was steadily forward; and, although the weather was intensely hot and sometimes rainy, we accomplished the march of three hundred and sixty miles, in thirteen marching days. At Canandaigua, on the fifth of July, we met the interesting intelligence that the Army had crossed the strait, on the morning of the third, at day-break; and that Fort Erie had capitulated, with only a slight resistance, immediately after. This report, of course, added new speed to our motion; and every person we met on the road was interrogated, without ceremony, for news. Nothing further of consequence however was obtained, until the morning of the seventh, when the confused rumor of a battle fought, first met us, at Genesee-river. In the course of the day, as we advanced, it became certain that an important

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\* "At the eve of our departure, I had the happiness to be allowed the companionship of Lieutenant Story, recently appointed in the Corps of Engineers,

"who had obtained orders attaching him to the Company, and took the field with us."—Major Douglass.



From the Pictorial Field-book of the War of 1812, by Benson J. Lossing, 1868c., p. 382.

battle had, in fact, been fought on the plains of Chippewa, with a decided advantage, it was said, on our side; and that the Army was already in motion, in pursuit.

We were now rapidly approaching the scene of many and long-cherished anticipations. Another day was to bring us within the sound of the artillery; and the occurrence of these rumors, as we approached—at first, vague; then, more determinate; and, at last, clear and definite on matters of the greatest moment—gave increasing interest, at every step of our progress.

On the ninth of July, at noon, we arrived at Buffalo—not the enterprising, busy metropolis of Western New York, as it now is, spreading its noble avenues, miles in length, on every side, and rearing aloft its stately edifices and glittering domes; but a wide, desolate expanse, with only two small houses visible; a few rude sheds and shanties; a soiled tent, here and there; and, in one or two places, a row of marquees, of a better sort, apparently giving shelter to some wounded men. These were all the habitations, or substitutes for habitations, the place afforded. Half a dozen isolated sentinels were seen on post, keeping guard over as many irregular piles of loose stores and camp-equipage; and the ground, recently occupied by the camp—thick set with rows of measured squares, worn smooth on the surface, and scattered, here and there, with fragments of soldiers' clothes, old belts, and accoutrements, of various kinds—gave an air of desolation to the whole scene, only rendered the more striking by these details; and, in fact, Buffalo, just deserted by the busy groups which had, a few days before, occupied it, was desert and comfortless, beyond any power of mine to describe. The two buildings were, above and below, filled with wounded officers from the Battle of Chippewa; and here, during an hour's halt, under no very pleasing auspices, commenced our intercourse with the realities of War.

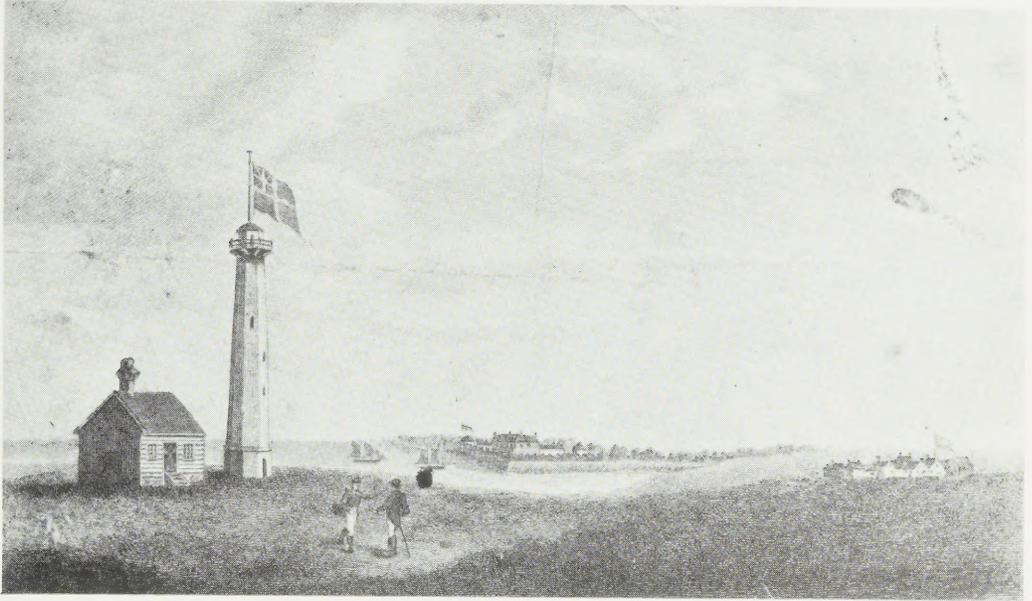
We had little time to linger, however. The goal of our present aim was still in advance. The Army was understood to be at Chippewa, eighteen miles down the river; and this further distance was to be accomplished, if possible, before the Company had rest. Here, however, a difficulty occurred, as to the means of transport—every vehicle was in Canada; and our wagoners, having been engaged only to Buffalo, refused to cross the river. Persuasions, promises, and threats were exhausted upon them, in vain; and there seemed no alternative but to pitch our camp at Buffalo, for the night. At this stage of our embarrassment, however, it was recollected, fortunately, that a launch, or hulk, of eighteen or twenty tons burden, was laying at Black Rock, two miles below; and thither we accordingly marched, without a moment's delay.

The launch was on shore, at high-water mark, and badly out of repair; but the whole Company were set, immediately, to work; and, after four hours labor, she was placed in the water, at sun-set, apparently almost tight. The Quartermaster furnished us with a pilot; we immediately embarked, with all our establishment of equipage and camp-stores, and committed ourselves to the current of the Niagara, having appointed relays of men to keep the water out of the boat. It soon turned out that our pilot had never been down the river, before, and scarcely knew how to steer a boat. He wished to go down to Chippewa; and thought this a good opportunity.

We knew of no difficulty, however, in navigating the river, except to stop at the proper point; and of this, as the roar of the cataract became audible, we resolved *not to be unmindful*. The night was clear, but dark. We drew cautiously over to the Canada shore, and kept near it, all the way; and, at length, as the increased current indicated our approach to the Rapids, we discovered the lights of the camp, at Chippewa. Some difficulty, encountered in getting round a body of drift wood, at the mouth of the creek, threw us out some distance into the channel, and caused us to drop a little below before we made the shore; but a dozen men leaped into the water, with a line, as soon as we got within their depth; and we were presently brought to, in the still water of the Chippewa. In the mean time, we were challenged by two or three sentinels at once, and a file of men hastily sent to ascertain whom we might be. Satisfied, on that point, however, and report made at Head-quarters, we were welcomed within the cordon of the Army, and made comfortable for the night.

It was just twelve o'clock when our launch was moored; and, within ten minutes from that time, every man, although they had had no refreshment, except a few biscuit, since the preceding morning, was stretched on the ground, or in the boat, fast asleep. Two Staff-officers, at the same time, relinquished to Lieutenant Story and myself what was then deemed the perfection of camp hospitality—to each of us, six feet by one of dry, plank flooring, and an equal area of spread buffalo-skin. It was, indeed, a luxury, though to us not a new one; and, in our duffel cloaks—booted and belted—we soon realized the value of it. And such was our first night's lodging in Canada.

With regard to the positions of the Army: it was found that the main body, on the day just preceding our arrival, had moved forward to Queenston; and the troops among whom we had been received at Chippewa, were the New York and Pennsylvania Volunteers, under General Porter. The morning following, therefore,



*View of Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario from the lighthouse on the British side.*

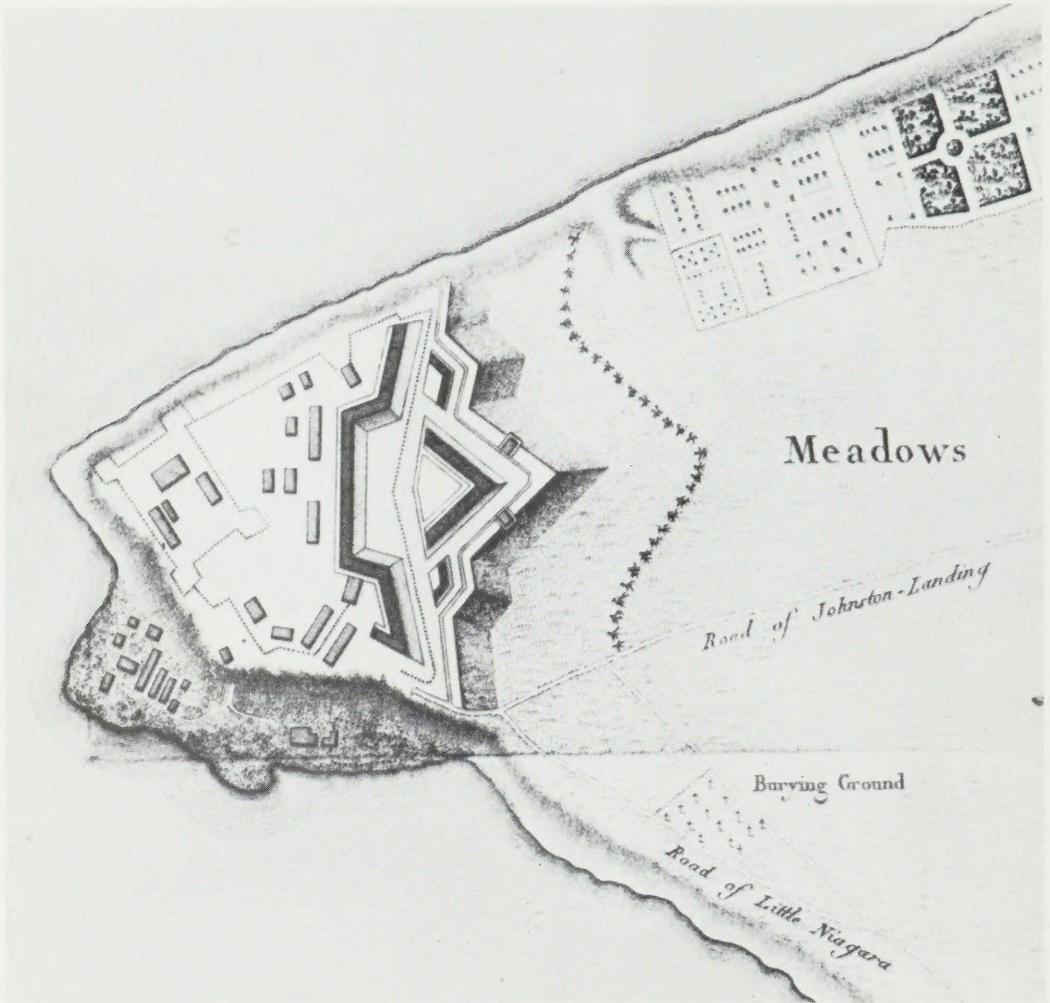
found my little command again on its feet, with wagons loaded for the remaining march of eight miles to Queenston.

You will judge of the interest which absorbed us, at that time, when I mention that even the great cataract of Niagara, roaring within a few hundred yards of our path, was scarcely an object to be regarded. A brief halt was, indeed, permitted; but scarce a minute allowed for a rapid glance before the drum-taps called every man back to his post; and we were again in full march forward.

But how shall I describe the emotions with which we drank in our first view from Queenston Heights! Standing on the crest of the mountain, near where Brock's monument now stands, the horizon—East, West, and North—was terminated by the silvery surface of Lake Ontario, having its nearest shore in front, about five miles distant. Between that and the foot of the mountain, some three hundred feet below us, lay a varied and beautiful surface of verdure and foliage, intersected by the Niagara-river, running from the abyss of the Rapids, near where we stood, directly out to the lake. But these, beautiful as they were, were not the objects that chiefly engaged our attention. Beneath our feet were a small village and a broad expanse of open plain, adjoining, literally whitened with tents. Long

lines of troops were under arms; columns in motion; guards coming in and going out; Divisions of Artillery on drill; videttes of Cavalry at speed; and Aides and Staff-officers, here and there, in earnest movement. There was no great display of gaudy plums or rich trappings; but, in their stead, grey-jackets—close buttoned—plain white belts, steel hilts, and brown muskets; but there were bayonets fixed, and a glance of the eye would show that those boxes were well filled with ball-cartridges. \* There was an earnestness, and with good reason, for, yonder, in plain sight, are the colors of the enemy waving proudly over the ramparts of Fort Niagara and Fort George; and a straggling ray, now and then reflected, tells of bayonets fixed, there, too. This, then, was no mere parade—no stage play, for effect—it was a simple and sublime reality—IT WAS WAR.

A few minutes only could be spared to enjoy this sublime and thrilling spectacle; and we were again in motion, descending the hill, to mingle in the moving groups, below. As an addition to the force, we were received with open arms; and our personal greetings were no less cordial. While the Company was filing in, its position in line was determined and laid out by the proper officer; and, on the following day, half the battering-train was assigned to the Bom-



*Plan of Fort Niagara.*

bardiers, and was fought by them, afterwards, to the end of the Campaign.

And here, for the present, fearful of having trespassed too far upon your indulgence, I suspend my narrative. But, before I take leave, allow me to deprecate your judgment for having occupied so large a portion of your attention in matters of personal interest, and things relating to myself. I assure you I am not so unaware of the foible, sometimes charged—perhaps justly—upon the dotage of the military profession, as not to have guarded myself, generally, against it. And if I have departed, in some degree,

from my customary rule, this evening, it is only in obedience to the suggestion of some of your number, in whose judgment, on such matters, I have more reason to confide than in my own. Thus sanctioned, as I have now explained all the external relations of the Campaign and fairly introduced myself as the narrator, I propose, on another occasion, if it meet your approbation, to give, in a simple narrative, the scenes and events following, as they actually presented themselves or became known to me, at the time, beginning with the Battle of Chippewa, although it occurred a few days before my

arrival, and ending with the evacuation of the British lines, before Fort Erie, on the nineteenth of September.

The more I reflect upon the incidents of this period, the more sensible I am that, on the part of the community, at large, they have never been rightly understood or duly appreciated. With the exception of the official dispatches—which are always necessarily hurried and concise—and the communications of a few of the officers, nearly all that has been published, in relation to those events, has, in some way or other, from design or otherwise, done them injustice. The British officers seem more disposed to set a proper value upon them than we, ourselves.

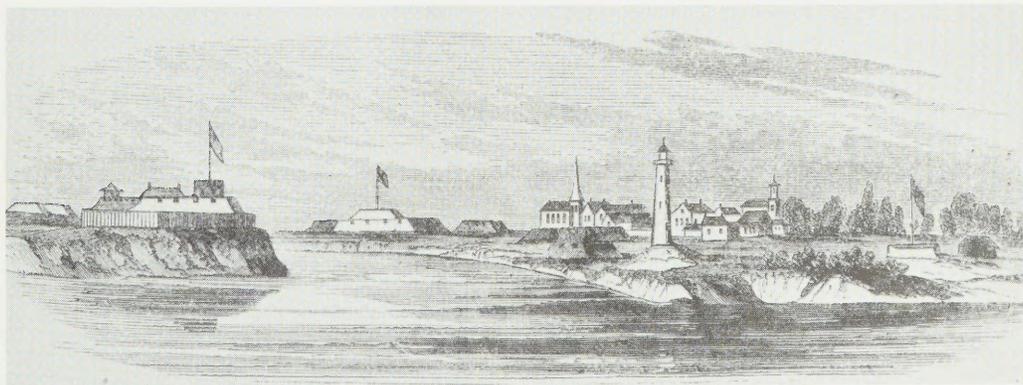
It is much to be desired that some means should be taken to retrieve these events from the untoward influences under which they have hitherto rested; and, in as far as I can be instrumental in doing this, my ardent desire, as a lover of my country and my country's service, will be truly gratified.

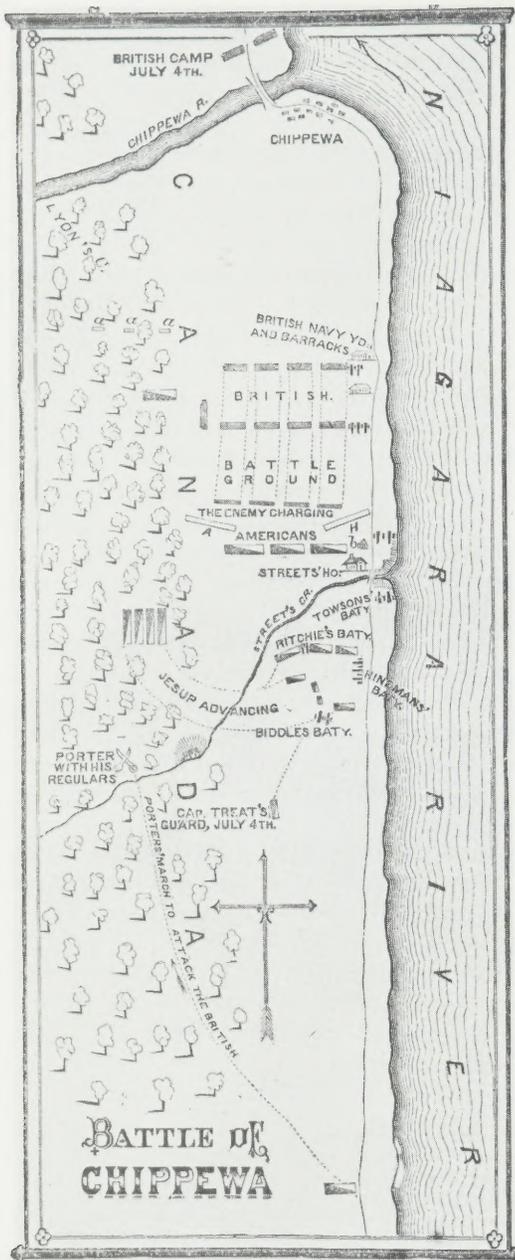
The Strait of Niagara, on which the Campaign was fought, demands a momentary notice, before I proceed with my narrative. Its length—from Lake Erie, of which it is the outlet, to Lake Ontario, into which it empties—is about thirty miles; the first seventeen above the Falls being navigable, in connection with Lake Erie, and the last five, below Queenston, in connection with Lake Ontario; the intermediate distance, embracing the Falls and the upper and lower Rapids, is, of course, not navigable. Beginning at the foot of Lake Erie, about a mile and a half above where the Lake is considered as passing into the river, we have, on our side, Buffalo, the place of rendezvous of the Army, before the opening of the Campaign; and,

nearly opposite to it, on the Canada side, about three miles distant, Fort Erie. Two miles below Buffalo, on the American side, is the present village of Black Rock; and, about fifteen miles further down, at the head of the Rapids, immediately above the Falls, is the position of the old French trading-post of Fort Schlosser, on our side, and, opposite to it, the little village of Chippewa, at the mouth of the Chippewa-creek, in Canada. From Lake Erie to this point, the river is generally deep and rapid, varying in width from half a mile, at Black Rock, to two miles, at Chippewa; and containing several islands, one of which, called "Grand-island," embraced between two widely diverging channels, contains nearly thirty square miles of surface. From the village of Chippewa to the Falls, following the road, on the Canada side, is about two and a half miles; and half a mile further to Lundy's-lane, the site of the battle. The heights of Queenston, on the Canada side, and of Lewiston, on ours, are about five miles still further down, with the villages of the same names, respectively, immediately below. And, finally, at the confluence of the river with Lake Ontario, five miles below Queenston, are situated Fort George and an outwork called Fort Massisauaga, both on the Canada side, and Fort Niagara, on ours.

At the opening of the Campaign, on the third of July, Fort Erie was a small unfinished work, occupied by a garrison of about one hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty men, commanded by a Major. The American Army, in crossing, was organized in two Divisions, one of which landed above the Fort and the other below, while it was yet dark, on the morning of the third; and having sent a light

*Entrance to the Niagara River, from Lossing's Pictorial Field-book, p. 597.*





Map indicates movements of the troops, AH shows the position of the American troops when they made the final charge. a,a,a, the point to which Porter drove the British and Indians, b, Street's barn. From Lossing's Pictorial Field-book, p. 810.

force of Indians and Volunteers, through the woods, in rear of the work, its pickets were all driven in, and the Fort itself, after a slight show of resistance, surrendered. An American garrison was then placed in it; and, on the following morning, the advance of the Army, under General Scott, moved down the Niagara and took position, at Street's-creek, about a mile and a half above Chippewa—his front protected by the creek, and his right flank, supported by artillery, resting upon the Niagara—and in this position, he was joined, the same evening, by the Commander-in-chief, with the main body of the Army. General Riall, with a British force, was, at the same time, posted behind a heavy line of intrenchments, below the Chippewa-creek. The situation of the two Armies, then, on the morning of the fifth of July, may be easily apprehended—Chippewa-creek being in front of the British; Street's-creek in front of the Americans; and a level plain, a little more than a mile wide, between the two; bounded by the Niagara-river, on one side, and woods, with occasional patches of low ground, on the other.

The early part of the day passed without any particular hostile movement, on either side. A firing of pickets and scouts occurred, in the woods, on our left, which, a little after noon, became rather spirited; and General Porter was detached, with his Volunteers, about four o'clock, with directions to move, in a circuit, beyond the skirmishing parties, and compel them to retire or, if possible, to intercept them. This he did, as to the movement; but the enemy having obtained notice of his approach, drew back, without his being able to cut them off; and, being strongly reinforced by a corps of embodied Militia and light troops, they presently became, in turn, the attacking party; and the General was compelled to retire.

It soon appeared that the troops, which had thus been thrown forward for the dislodgment of our Volunteers, were a part of the enemy's advance, intended to cover a regular sortie; and that he was now already in motion, across the plain, with his entire force, in order for battle. To receive them, in a becoming manner, General Scott was immediately thrown across Street's-creek, with the First Brigade, consisting of the Ninth, Eleventh, Twenty-second, and Twenty-fifth Regiments of Infantry and Towson's Artillery—the latter taking post near the river, and the former displaying, in order of battle, to the left, with the extreme left thrown forward. It was all done with the promptness and accuracy of a grand review; and the instant the line was displayed, it was engaged with the enemy. The latter was allowed, however, to deliver his fire, several times, and approach to short point-blank

distance, without any return. A tremendous fire was then opened, from the whole of our line, firing with deliberate aim, by word of command—the left, under Colonel Jessup, bearing upon the enemy's right—and, as the enemy were seen to be thrown in some confusion by it, the word was passed to "Cease firing!" "Recover arms!" and "Charge with the bayonet!"—all which was done with admirable coolness and promptitude, and with an effect which, considering the nature of the troops opposed, it was hardly possible to realize. The columns which had been in full march upon us, but a few moments before, were now, in another brief minute, routed and flying, in uncontrollable disorder, towards the Chippewa.

The coolness and deliberation with which the enemy were received, in this, the first conflict of the Campaign, was a new event for both parties. From ourselves, owing to the circumstances I have mentioned, it has scarcely ever received the commendation to which it was entitled; while British officers, who were in the battle, speak of it in the most enthusiastic terms. "We had never seen those grey-jackets before," they said. "We supposed it was only a line of Militia-men; and wondered why you did not run, at the first fire. We began to doubt, when we found you stood, firmly, three or four rounds; and when, at length, in the midst of our hottest blaze, we saw you 'Port arms' and advance upon us, we were utterly amazed. It was clear enough we had something besides Militia-men to deal with."

General Riall, in his official Report, speaking of the critical point of the action, says, "I immediately moved up the King's Regiment to the right, while the Royal Scots and the One hundredth Regiment were directed to charge the enemy, in front, for which they advanced, with the greatest gallantry, under a most destructive fire. I am sorry to say, however, in this attempt, they suffered so severely that I was obliged to withdraw them, finding their further efforts against the superior numbers of the enemy would be unavailing." And what was the superiority in numbers? In another part of his Report, he represents the aggregate force, on our side, at six thousand men; having been augmented, he says, by a very large body of troops, immediately before the commencement of the action; whilst his own force, exclusive of Militia and Indians, is stated at fifteen hundred. Before noticing the battle, in any other respect, let us correct these numbers and present the case as it actually occurred. Our entire aggregate force, in Canada, on the day of the battle, was less than three thousand five hundred men. Of these, the Volunteers were engaged in the woods, with about an equal number of the same descrip-

tion of troops, on the part of the enemy; and these, therefore, may be paired off against each other. A large part of the Artillery was wholly unengaged. General Ripley's Brigade was put in motion, to act on the flank of the enemy, through the woods, and made praiseworthy exertions to do this; but, in point of fact, it did not reach its ground in season, and did not, therefore, take any part in the action. The main battle on our part, was fought, then, entirely by General Scott's Brigade and Towson's Artillery, amounting to about one thousand men against one thousand, five hundred. It was a fair trial of nerve and discipline, between these forces; on plain, open ground; without any local advantage or any adventitious circumstance, on either side; and the result was the entire *repulse*, to use no harsher phrase, of the more numerous party.

We claim this result, then, without illiberality, as a fair triumph, on our side; the more signal, as we estimate, highly, the gallantry of the veteran troops opposed to us and the peculiar circumstances under which we met them. Our one thousand, it will be observed, were many of them new in service, and most of them now meeting, for the first time, a disciplined enemy, in the open field. They were hastily displayed, on ground not before occupied by them, with all the moral disadvantage of feeling themselves on the defensive. On the other hand, one thousand, five hundred veteran soldiers, in the highest possible state of discipline—being composed of the Eighth, or King's, Regiment, of the line, the One Hundredth of the line, and the Royal Scots—unsurpassed by any troops in the British Army for bravery or loyalty; the ground chosen, at the option of the British Commander, and with which he was perfectly familiar; and *they*, the assailants. If it had been an appointed combat for trial of strength, between equal parties, what advantage could have been asked, on the adverse side, which was not enjoyed? Yet, with a disparity in the ratio of two to three against us, we were eminently victorious.

The Battle of Chippewa may be called a small affair, and certainly was not, as to the numbers engaged, entitled to the rank of a great battle. It required less generalship, on that account; but the conduct of the troops was, in no respect, inferior; and it is but fair to conclude that the same elements multiplied in any ratio, and as well marshalled, would, with the corresponding disparity of force, have accomplished a similar result. Such was the view taken of it by British officers as well as ourselves. During all the previous Campaigns, no opportunity had occurred so favorable for a trial of strength, in which the victory had not been decidedly on their side, or questionably, at least,

on ours. Here there was no room for doubt; the victory against great odds had been fairly won by us, and now, for the first time, during the War, was it felt that the *esprit du corps* of real service and real discipline had been attained.

The Battle of Chippewa was not more remarkable as the exponent of discipline than as the beginning of a new era, in the mutual confidence and esteem of the opposing forces. They greatly mistake who imagine that such encounters provoke anything like personal animosity or vindictiveness, between the parties concerned. Quite the contrary! The sentiment excited in every generous mind is that of respect and esteem for a brave and loyal enemy—the more decided, as those qualities are more distinctly characterized; and, probably, no persons interested in a state of War are so free from every sentiment of personal hostility as the very combatants themselves. The result of this battle, then, was to awaken a new and far more generous intimacy between the two services, if not between the two Nations, than had ever existed before.

The two days following the battle were employed in opening roads and providing the means for crossing the Chippewa, above the village. The British General, seeing the vigor with which these works were advanced, in spite of his attempts to prevent it, and alarmed for his safety, in flank and rear, as soon as the end should be accomplished, hastily broke up his camp, on the seventh, and retreated down the river. On the ninth of the month, General Brown moved forward, with the main body of the Army, and occupied the camp on the plains of Queenston, where I joined, on the tenth; and where, on the eleventh, he was also joined by the Volunteers having charge of the baggage and stores of the Army, who took post on Queenston-heights.

The week following my arrival in camp, though not marked by any movement of consequence, in the operations of the Army, was, to me, a period of the deepest interest. My local position, in the encampment, was designated and occupied, near Head-quarters, in the centre of a vast semi-circle, on the circumference of which were posted thirteen different Regiments, detachments, and Corps. It would be difficult to transfer, to this peaceful hour and place, an adequate impression of the military sights and sounds which gave animation to the scene. The various guards mounting; the drills and parades;

the regimental beats and bugle-calls, converging from so many different points, at once; retreat-beating and parade, at sundown; tattoo, at nine o'clock; and, above all, the fine old spirit-stirring reveille of Baron Steuben, at the earliest dawn of day. These beats commenced, generally, with the Regiment on the extreme right; then the next; the next; and so on; till the whole circumference was one grand chorus of the most thrilling martial music. To some, perhaps, these sounds may be familiar; and a reference to them, in a Lecture, may seem common-place; but few, I presume, who hear me, can have been privileged to hear them in the associations of actual War, in the presence of an enemy, and under circumstances of so much interest as in the case now referred to.

Occasionally, the scene was varied by occurrences of a more particular kind. On the thirteenth of July, a strong reconnoitering party, of several Regiments, with a detachment of Artillery, was seen, under arms, at an early hour in the morning; and, shortly after, moving off, in the direction of Fort George.\* A number of officers rode to the heights, to get a view of the scene of action; but, though the smoke of the Artillery was occasionally visible, near Fort George, and a heavy firing heard, the detachment, itself, was hid by the foliage; and we were left in uncertainty as to the nature of the encounter, until its return, at evening. It was then ascertained that the object of the enterprise had been accomplished, the pickets and outposts of the enemy having been beaten back, and the ground examined to within a short distance of the Fort. But the morrow had a tale to tell. The booming of minute-guns, from some battery, on the heights over our heads, and the close roll of the muffled drum, announced the funeral of a General officer, in the camp of the Volunteers—General Swift of the New York Volunteers.

The little Corps of Sappers and Miners, in the mean time, had been armed with a part of the battering-train of artillery; and my own attention was now unceasingly required in distributing and training them for their new duties. From the tenth to the twentieth of the month, with very little intermission, their whole time was employed in the most laborious drills and field-exercises, for which I was fully compensated when the "Marching Order" came out, on the day last mentioned, in contemplating my little Corps, with its long cavalcade, armed, and

\* The object of a reconnoissance, is to obtain information as to the enemy's position, and force, and disposition, and intentions, and the local resources of the country. This may be accomplished, with sufficient accuracy, under

certain circumstances, by only one or two individuals. But, at other times, the object of the reconnoissance can only be obtained by using a heavy detachment, like the one mentioned above.—*Major Douglass.*



*A view of Fort George, Upper Canada, from Old Fort Niagara, 1813.*

in complete order, the first in readiness to move.†

The Orders for marching came out on the evening of the eighteenth, but were countermanded, on the following morning. But, on the twentieth, however, the whole force was in motion, at an early hour, in the direction of Fort George; and, at mid-day, we were in position about a mile from the Fort, having our right on the river, and our left thrown back. The dis-

tance was so small, that our picket-guards, on the right, were nearly in contact with those of the enemy; and, almost immediately after they were posted, a running fire commenced, between the first two and their opponents, which continued, without any long interval, while we lay in that position.\*

The day after our arrival, when this firing was more than ordinarily brisk, I was invited by my friend, Colonel Wood, to join him, in a personal

† "The whole Army was put under marching orders, last evening, to move, very early, this morning; and the Bombardiers had the honor to be the first in readiness, being ready to strike their tents before reveille. The tents were struck about seven o'clock, throughout the camp. I had all my drivers mounted and every man at his post, from that time till near eleven, when an Order came to re-encamp. The marching order is renewed, this evening; and the same scene is to be acted over again, to-morrow morning, only with a different catastrophe."—*Letter, by Lieutenant Douglass, dated July 19th, 1814.*

*July 20th.* "It is morning, and one Brigade has just moved off. It was a glorious sight. The Heavy Artillery will probably move in the course of an hour, and, with it, of course, my own Corps, and then follows the remainder of the Army. I wish you could see my present line of march. It consists of two very long and heavy eighteen-pounders, drawn by six horses each; two caissons, drawn by four horses each; two shot-

wagons, drawn by four horses each; and two two-horse wagons, loaded with implements and camp equipage. "I have also a good horse for myself."—*Letter from Lieutenant Douglass, July 20, 1814.*

\* In the arrangements of a camp, in the vicinity of an enemy, small detachments of Infantry or Cavalry, called "Pickets," are thrown out, at various points, beyond the line of the camp sentinels. These pickets are often again divided into small parties, which are thrown still further forward, and which may again be sub-divided into individual guards. In this method, the whole range of country, for one, two, or three miles, in every direction, may be completely under the surveillance of a military encampment. Desertions are prevented; the enemy's reconnoitering parties are intercepted; and, should the enemy appear in force, timely notice is given for his proper reception, while, at the same time, various annoyances may be employed for his obstruction. In the case of a forced reconnoissance, a very strong detachment is sometimes required to beat in these pickets.—*Major Douglass.*

reconnaissance, towards the Fort, as a military exercise, for my own benefit; and, having obtained the permission of the Chief Engineer, we mounted and rode towards the outpost. We passed down the high road, leading to the Fort, under cover of an intervening piece of woods, near which our picket No. 1 was posted. As we approached this, we discovered that the firing was chiefly at the second picket, about two hundred yards to the left; and, crossing the fences, we came out into the open fields, in rear of that position, having no longer the cover of woods but the Fort, in full view, before us, at the distance of about half a mile. The field in which we were was full of stumps and trunks of trees, behind which, on the side nearest the Fort, our picket-guard was sheltered; and the next field, in the direction of the Fort, of the same character, was similarly occupied by the picket of the enemy. They were pretty closely engaged, and, of course, our appearance, on horseback, gave increased animation to the fire, on both sides—our picket endeavoring to drive their opponents and divert their attention from us; while the British, on their side, were equally endeavoring to get the best positions and the best aim for hitting us. We, ourselves, kept apart and in motion, moving irregularly, with our eyes chiefly directed upon the Fort; and, though the balls whistled around us, in great numbers, it so happened, miraculously, as I then thought, that neither of us was hit.\*

My attention was presently diverted by my companion calling to me, in a hurried manner, to "*Keep back!*" as they were manœuvring a gun upon us. "Don't let them take us in range," he said; and, raising my eyes to the Fort, it was easy to see that they were preparing to fire. They did not do so, however, probably thinking it not worth while to waste a shot upon either of us, singly; and, after a few moments

further delay, we returned to picket No. 1. Here, it was our intention to reconnoitre through the woods; and a couple of videttes having crept cautiously forward, with guns cocked, to see that no lurking foe was secreted in the bushes, we were enabled to penetrate nearly through the coppice. We then betook ourselves to the trees, climbing till we could just see the Fort, at the distance of about seven hundred yards, over the foliage; and, having completed our observations, in about twenty minutes, without interruption, we returned quietly to camp.

An attempt was made by the enemy, in the course of the same day, to reconnoitre us, from the tops of a small schooner which stood a little way up the river, for that purpose. A battery being formed to open upon them, and a fire kindled for heating shot in rear, they became alarmed and immediately dropped down again to their ordinary anchorage. A slight alarm, raised on one of the pickets, on the following morning, brought us to our feet in apprehension of an attack. It amounted to nothing, in fact; but, as it was near daylight, when it occurred, we continued under arms till morning.

On the morning of the twenty-second, we broke up our camp, at Fort George, and moved back again to Queenston; occupying the heights, this time, with the village of Queenston, on the plain, below, as an outpost. My own particular position, in this case, was on the brow of the hill, precisely at the spot since occupied by Brock's monument; and, here, as the view was very commanding, the Staff-officers, particularly the two Colonels of Engineers, were in the habit of making their rendezvous and employing much of their time, during our continuance at that place, in sweeping the horizon of the lake with their glasses. It was the expectation that the fleet might make its appearance, and bring with it an additional supply of battering-guns and other

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\* The passing remarks of the lecturer were, we are assured, almost literally the following: "Perhaps you would like to know how I *felt* when, for the first time, I heard the balls whistling about me. I have no objection to telling you. I have heard of a Spaniard who said he never knew what fear was. Such was not the case with me. I should like to have had a strong stone-wall between me and the enemy, for I expected to be either killed or wounded; and I certainly did not want to be either. When the close *whit* of the balls was particularly sharp and spiteful, I could hardly avoid putting up my finger, with the impression that the tip of my ear, at least, must have been touched.

"I may remark, by the way, that many observations have convinced me how great a mistake it is to imagine that courage, in a high sense, consists merely in insensibility to danger. So far from this being the case, I af-

firm that true courage may be consistent, not only with the knowledge, but even with the apprehension, of danger. The courage, so called, which is utterly blind to danger, is of a lower order of qualities. It is rather of a character with the courage of a brute animal, who does not know nor consider the extent of the opposition which he shall meet with, and is, certainly, in this respect, insensible to fear. But I am tempted to say that the man who never knew what fear was, could neither, on the other hand, realize the greatness of courage. That is true courage, which advances, in the very face of danger, even to the cannon's mouth—not ignorantly, but with a full view of all the hazards and responsibilities of the position; not because there is no sense of peril, but because all individual and personal considerations are thrown aside, for the higher claims of a manly responsibility in the path of duty, where *only* true honor lies."

ammunitions, for the attack of the Forts or, possibly, the plan of a combined attack upon Kingston, for which the time appeared not unfavorable.

I allude to this expectation, on our part, as a fact, connected with the operations of the Campaign, and far from intending any reflection as to the grounds upon which it was built or the circumstances which prevented its being realized. No two Commanders, during the War, established higher claims to the esteem and gratitude of their country, than Commodore Chauncey and General Brown; for no two men, within the circle of my own personal intercourse, had I a more entire esteem and regard, while living, or to their memories a more profound respect, when dead. They differed in their views of this co-operation; and who will doubt that, in so doing, *both* of them were guided by pure and patriotic motives? *They*, at least, entertained no such doubt; and, though a temporary cloud did come over their intercourse, at the time, it was dissipated, immediately after the War, and they continued in uninterrupted intimacy and friendship, as long as they both lived.

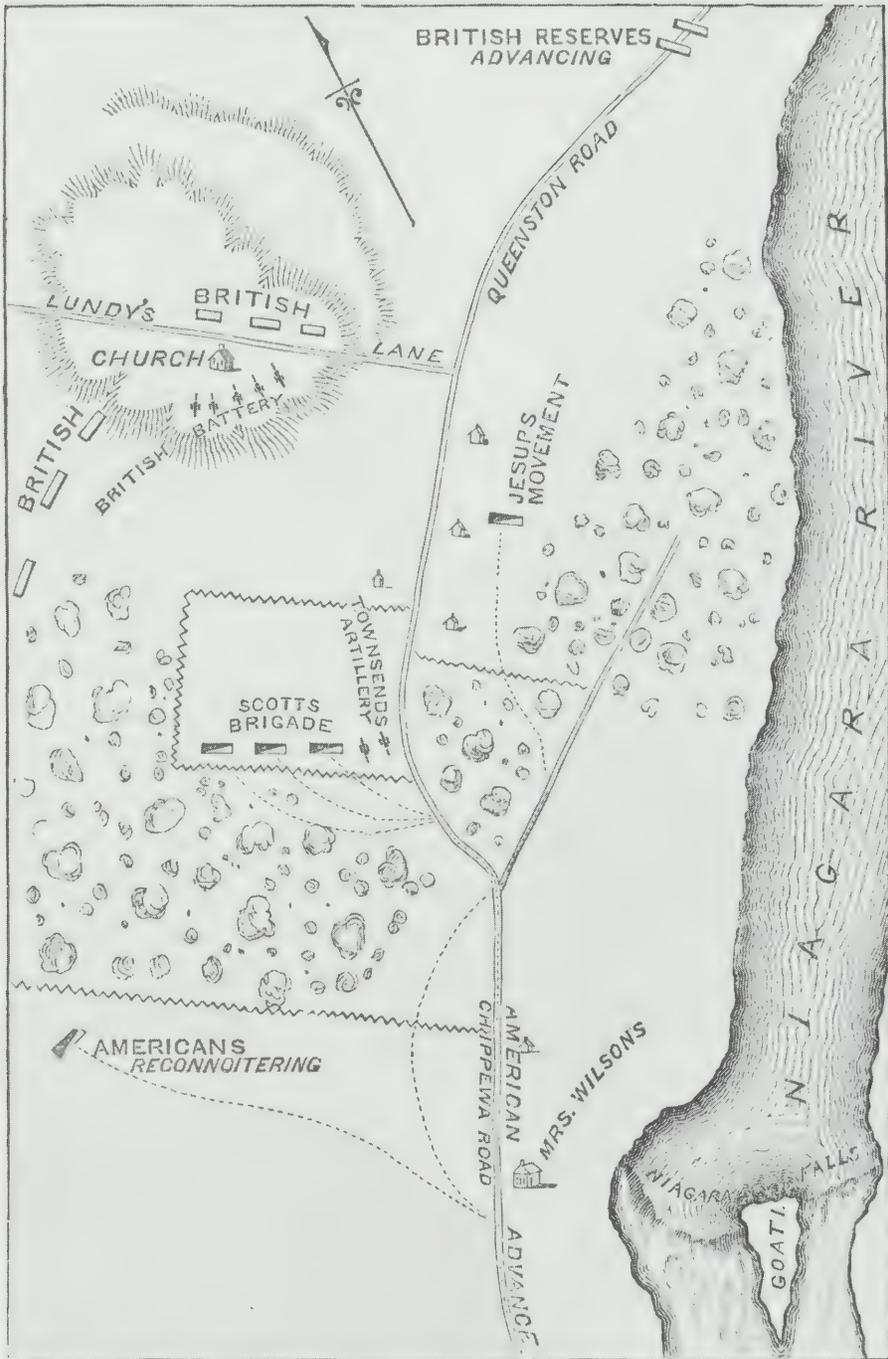
We remained in our position, on Queenston-heights, until the morning of the twenty-fourth, at which time the expectation of the fleet and every mode of co-operation, in that quarter, was given up. In a conversation, on the preceding morning, I was apprised that the plan of our future operations was about to be changed; the attack upon Fort Niagara and Fort George to be abandoned, for the present; and an attempt made to intercept the enemy's line of communication, round the head of Lake Ontario, by an attack upon Burlington-heights: which, if once occupied by us, and the Lake *also* in our possession, would isolate General Riall's Army, with the forts, and place them, virtually, at our disposal. The execution of this plan, with due caution and effect, made it necessary for a better connection with our depot at Buffalo, to fall back, temporarily, from Queenston-heights to Chippewa; and this movement was accordingly made, on the twenty-fourth, and the ground occupied, on the South side of the Chippewa, fronting northward, with the village in advance.

Such was the state of things, when the circumstances which led to the Battle of Lundy's-lane intervened, and gave a new relation to all our affairs. After the Battle of Chippewa, and during the time we had been manœvering on Fort George, General Riall had retired, up the lake, in the direction of Burlington-heights and, there, intrenched himself, at Twelve-mile-creek; but having recently received reinforcements, and learning, as we afterwards found out, that a large addition to his force was at hand, under the com-

mand of Lieutenant-general Drummond, he advanced from his secure position, and began, again, to hover in our neighborhood; and, on the twenty-fifth, in the morning, one of his advanced parties was discovered by our picket-guard, in the vicinity of the Falls.

It was on the afternoon of that day—a fine July day, not excessively hot—between five and six o'clock. The Sappers and Miners had just been dismissed from drill. My attention was called to a column, in the act of moving out from the encampment of the First Brigade. My own encampment was on the bank of Chippewa-creek, at the South end of the bridge, between the high-road and the river. As the column approached the bridge, my good friend, Colonel Wood, rode up to me, with a countenance of unusual animation, and gave me an opportunity of learning its object. "The British," he said, "are understood to be crossing the Niagara, at Queenston, and threatening a dash up the river, on that side. They are also in movement, on this side. We wish to find out what their dispositions are; and the detachment before us, under the command of General Scott, is ordered to make a reconnoissance and create a diversion, should circumstances require; and, if we meet the enemy, we shall probably feel his pulse." "May I go with you?" said I. "If McRee will let you," he replied. Having obtained the approbation of the Chief Engineer, I mounted; and, joining him, we rode forward to the front of the vanguard.

We had proceeded nearly three-fourths of the distance from Chippewa to the Falls without any particular incident, when, in passing round a small coppice of woods, we came in sight of an old dwelling-house, the residence of Mrs. Wilson. There was a number of Cavalry-horses, in the yard, caparisoned and holstered, with one or two mounted Dragoons attending; and, almost at the instant our eyes fell upon them, eight or ten British officers stepped, hastily, from the house and mounted their horses. Some of them rode away briskly; but three or four, after mounting, faced towards us, and surveyed us with their glasses. An elderly officer, of dignified and commanding mien, stationed himself in the middle of the road, a little in advance of his companions, and coolly inspected the head of our column, as it came in sight. They waited until we had approached within perhaps two hundred and fifty yards; and then retreated, slowly, with their glasses scarcely withdrawn, until the leading officer, closing his glass, waived, with his hand, a military salute, which was promptly returned by us, as they all wheeled and rode swiftly away.



*The Battle of Lundy's Lane, from Lossing's Pictorial Field-book, p. 823.*

During this time, bugle signals were passed, hurriedly, in various directions, through and beyond the woods, to the distance, apparently, of about half a mile beyond the house. Colonel Wood and myself being a little in advance, were first met, at the door, by Mrs. Wilson, who exclaimed, with well-affected concern, "Oh, Sirs! if you had only come a little sooner 'you would have caught them all.'" "Where 'are they, and how many?" we asked. "It 'is General Riall," she said, "with eight hundred Regulars, three hundred Militia and 'Indians, and two pieces of artillery." General Scott then rode up, with his Staff, and, dismounting, the group of officers entered the house and closely interrogated the woman. When she had given all the information which could be elicited, the eye of the General ran round the circle until it rested upon the person of, perhaps, the most youthful officer present. "Would you be willing to return to camp, Sir?" said he. Not aware of the purport of these words, and doubtful, in my inexperience, whether or no the General wished to test my disposition to sustain the hazard of a conflict, I remained silent. Colonel Wood, however, noticed my embarrassment, and immediately relieved me, by introducing me and saying, "Lieutenant Douglass will, no doubt, be happy 'to bear your commands to General Brown." "Very well, Mr. Douglass, return, immediately, 'to camp, and tell General Brown that I have 'met with a detachment of the enemy, under 'General Riall, numbering eight hundred Regulars, three hundred Militia and Indians, and 'two pieces of artillery, and shall engage it, in 'battle." I mounted and rode off; but, before I turned the angle of the road, the troops were already beating down the fences and preparing for action.

As I spurred my wearied and foaming horse, over the bridge, at Chippewa, I heard the distant sound of the first firing; and, upon entering the camp, I found myself the object of general and anxious attention. Riding, directly, towards the quarters of the Commander-in-chief, I soon perceived General Brown and Colonel McRee listening to the reports, with very earnest attention. The General led the way to his *marque*, without a word; then turning—"Well, Sir?" "I left General Scott at 'Mrs. Wilson's. He desired me to say that he 'has met with a detachment of the enemy, 'under General Riall, numbering eight hundred 'Regulars, three hundred Militia and Indians, 'and two pieces of artillery." "And *th's firing?*" interposed the General. "General 'Scott said that he should immediately engage 'with the enemy," I replied. After a few words and comments, with Colonel McRee, Generals

Ripley and Porter were instantly ordered to advance and support General Scott. Colonel McRee directed me to return to the field, observing that he would soon follow me; and, in this expectation, I resolved to put myself on the *qui vive* for him, there.

It must have been at least a quarter past eight, for it was quite dark, when I approached the field of battle, on my return from camp. A little beyond Mrs. Wilson's house—which was brilliantly lighted up, for the accommodation of wounded men—I found the road diverging strongly to the left, through a piece of woods, after passing which, it again inclined to the right; but, directly forward, in front of the opening, there could be traced the dim outline of a hill, occupied by a battery of the enemy's artillery, in full play. It was very easy to see that there were more than two pieces. Several of the shots raked through the opening of the road. They appeared, generally, to pass over my head; but, occasionally, the limbs of trees were cut off by them, and dropped in the way. Here and there, I met parties returning with wounded men. Arriving at the open ground, I discovered the principal part of General Scott's Brigade, on the left of the road, actively engaged with what appeared to be the right wing of the enemy; and I accordingly turned and rode down, in rear of the line, in that direction, nearly to its left; but, not perceiving the officers I was in quest of, and observing, at the same time, some movements on the extreme right, which I had not before noticed, I turned and rode, in that direction, in expectation of finding them, there. As I reached the road, however, one of General Brown's Aids met me, in quest of General Scott; and, soon after, Colonel McRee came up, riding alone, at speed, and it was understood that General Brown and his Staff were not far behind.

"Come," said the Colonel, "let us see what 'these fellows are doing;" and, instead of riding down to the left, where the Infantry of the line were chiefly engaged, he spurred forward towards the British battery, to reconnoitre the field. It was now quite dark; but the firing of musketry indicated, plainly enough, the position and extent of the lines engaged; and, having examined these, with great animation, he drew up, at last, at the foot of the knoll on which the battery was posted. After contemplating it, for a few minutes, he turned to me, and raising his hand, he said, with his peculiar emphasis, "That hill is the key of the position, 'and must be taken;" and immediately led the way, to meet General Brown.

The General was already near at hand, and rode to the field, in company with the Chief Engineer, who expressed his opinion to him, in

the same terms as to me, and entered somewhat more fully into the explanation of them. In the mean time, Colonel Wood joined them, and informed me, a few minutes after, that arrangements had been made to detach the Twenty-first Regiment, under its gallant Colonel, Miller, to storm the height.

I am particular to mention all these circumstances, because the question has been mooted as to who originated the charge upon the British battery, at Lundy's-lane; and particular attempts have been made to attribute the suggestion of this movement to General Ripley. It is, in my view, a subordinate question, altogether; yet, in point of fact, I believe I am correct in saying that it was first suggested to the mind of the Commander-in-chief by Colonel McRee. The storming of the height had been fully discussed and arranged before General Ripley arrived. It was probably ten minutes after all this, before the head of the Second, (General Ripley's) Brigade arrived, through the opening of the woods, on the scene of action; and the order being then taken, the Twenty-first immediately took up its position for storming the height.\*

And now a word for the Twenty-first and its Colonel, Miller. Colonel Miller—now the venerable General James Miller, for I am happy to say his life is still spared to us—was a rare union of personal excellency of character with a strength and firmness of mind and body, seldom surpassed even in his own Granite State. He had been long in service, having joined the Army with the old Fourth Regiment, under Colonel Boyd, and had been seasoned in every Campaign, from Tippecanoe, downwards. His Regiment was somewhat of the same character with himself; raised, chiefly, in his native State, and devotedly attached to him; and in a fine

state of discipline. A better selection, therefore, could not have been made, for the arduous duty of storming the British battery.

The reply made by him, when it was proposed, was quite characteristic. "Colonel Miller," said the officer, "will you please to form up your Regiment and storm that height?" He raised his herculean form and fixed his eye, for an instant, intently upon the battery: then turning his bit of tobacco, with great sang-froid, he replied, with a significant nod, "I'll try, Sir! "Attention—the Twenty-first!" and, immediately, led away this Regiment in the direction required.\* The other Regiments of the Second Brigade filed along the road and halted, as a right wing to General Scott's Brigade; and, in this direction, the group of officers, with whom I was, moved, also, to avoid being brought in range when the assault upon the battery should take effect. Meantime, the Twenty-first was moved forward, silently and cautiously, but in perfect order, to a fence on the slope of the hill, about forty or fifty yards from the battery, behind which it drew up, in line; and, after pouring one well-directed volley into the battery, they pushed the fence flat before them, and rushed forward with the bayonet. The whole was the work of an instant; the hill was completely cleared of the enemy, in almost as little time as I have been narrating it, and the battery was ours.

Our troops then moved forward, on the right and left, and formed, in Order of Battle, on precisely the ground occupied by the British, at the commencement of the action, only fronting in the opposite direction and having the captured battery in rear. This formation was completed a little after, perhaps half-past, ten. A new moon, which had given a little light, in the early part of the evening, had now gone down;

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\* From the rough draft of a letter from the author to the late Hon. John Armstrong: "It will perhaps appear strange to you that a statement bearing, as you will perceive, in many of its particulars, upon some of the questions touching that battle—by which the service and the community were so much excited, in the year 1816—should have escaped all the investigations of that period and be now, for the first time, communicated as matter of history. I will, however, explain this circumstance. I was probably the youngest officer in service, if not in age, in the Battle of Bridgewater; and, feeling my position to be that of a pupil, it did not occur to me that anything which was seen or heard by me, in that battle, was equally, if not better, known to my superiors in rank.

"It happened, moreover, that the particular agency assigned to me, at the eve of the battle, was not stated in the Official Reports, either of General Scott or of Gen-

eral Brown. Colonel Jones was named as the officer by whom the first intelligence from the field was brought to the latter; and, my name not being mentioned, I was never called upon as a witness. The omission, if it deserves to be called by so serious a name, was not, at the time, considered as of any importance. Before it was known, the Campaign had already furnished occasions of higher consideration to myself, personally; and no motive then existed for calling the attention of those esteemed commanders to it. After the controversies to which I have alluded, I regretted not having done so; but it was then too late to be of use; and the subject was again suffered to sleep."

\* It is said that Colonel Miller, himself, first advanced, cautiously, up the hill, alone, to reconnoitre the ground; and, then, returning, gave the necessary directions to his Regiment.—Major Douglass.

and it was quite dark. Indeed, we had, at no time, after my return from camp, light enough to see the face of our enemy; but it was very evident, from his fires, that he was vastly more numerous than had been represented to us, by Mrs. Wilson; and this we shall be able to account for, presently, by the exhibition of his own Official Report. For the present, it was sufficient for us, that, whatever his numbers were, we had gained possession of his ground; and, although there was no reason to suppose that we should long enjoy it, without opposition, the successful issue of the battle, thus far, gave great animation and confidence to the troops; and enabled them to prepare, with coolness and determination, for the terrible conflict that awaited them.

They were yet but imperfectly formed, on their new ground, when the enemy re-appeared, in great force, as the assailant; and, after a few sharp volleys, given and received, the two lines closed in a desperate conflict with the bayonet.

The bayonet, you can well conceive, is a potent weapon, on the side of high discipline and strong nerves, and, especially, when united with the characteristic determination of the British soldier. The charge of bayonet is not often used, except as a last resort; and then seldom goes beyond the mere crossing of the weapons—one or the other party then breaks or retires. But it was not so, in this instance. It was maintained, on both sides, with an obstinacy of which the history of war furnishes few examples; and, finally, resulted in the second repulse of the enemy. A succession of similar charges—sometimes repelled by counter attacks, upon the flanks of the assailing party, and sometimes by the fire of musketry, in front, in volleys perfectly deafening—were continued, in rapid succession, for nearly an hour, with the same result; until the enemy, having suffered very severely, and wearied with the obstinacy of the combat and hopeless of success, abstained from further attacks, and left us in undisputed possession of the field.

In the meantime, in consequence of wounds received by General Brown and General Scott, the command had devolved upon General Ripley, who, after the termination of the battle, retained quiet possession of the field, for about an hour; and then retired, without the slightest molestation, to the encampment. In one particular only was this movement to be regretted. We had not brought off the captured artillery; and, upon this ground alone, can our antagonist, with any plausibility, dispute with us the palm of this victory.

About the time of the enemy's second attempt to dispossess us of our position, I had been di-

rected to return to camp and prepare my command for action, in case they should be required on the following day. Before leaving the height, I rode around, for the second or third time, among those pieces, to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing and handling them. They were eight in number—brass guns, of the most beautiful model, of different calibres, from six to twenty-four pounders. Not the slightest apprehension came over my mind that I should not, on the following morning, see them all drawn up, on the Camp Parade, at Chippewa; and, even with this assurance, I parted from them not without some reluctance. What, then, think ye, was the bitterness of my disappointment and regret, when I found, on the morning of the twenty-sixth, that the guns had been *left on the field*. Such, however, was the fact. In the absorbing interest of the strife, no one seems to have thought of providing means for getting off or destroying this artillery; and the omission was unfortunately not discovered until it became too late to remedy it.

Irrespective of this circumstance, however, the immediate issue of the battle was in the highest degree honorable and glorious to the American arms. It had been sustained by about five hours hard fighting, and against what disparity let us now examine by a reference to the British official account. It appears that, almost at the moment of commencing the action, General Riall, whose force may have been previously not far from that stated by Mrs. Wilson, had been joined by Lieutenant-general Drummond, with an addition of about one thousand veteran troops, making, with Riall's force, an aggregate of one thousand, eight hundred Regulars, besides three or four hundred Militia and Indians, which are known to have been in this part of the battle; and this was the state of the field, on the British side, from the beginning of the battle until about nine o'clock. On our side, during the same time, it was contested by General Scott's Brigade only, with a small detachment of Artillery, amounting in all to about eight hundred and fifty, say nine hundred, effective men. About nine o'clock, both armies were simultaneously reinforced—ours, by the Brigade of General Ripley, a part of Porter's Volunteers, and some Artillery, in all about thirteen hundred men; that of the enemy by the One hundred and third and One hundred and fourth Regiments, with the balance of the Royal Scots, amounting, by the statement of General Drummond, to about fourteen hundred Regulars, in all—and, as near as can be estimated, the state of the field, including the killed and wounded of the previous fighting, was then a little less than four thousand, on the part of the British, against, at the utmost, not more than



The Smithsonian Institution  
The Star-Spangled Banner in its new location in the Smithsonian Institution.

# The Commemoration of the Sesquicentennial of the Writing of "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the War of 1812.

THE commemoration of the 150 years which have followed the War of 1812 is significant during a period of recurrent border troubles around the world. Since the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817 for mutual disarmament of the Great Lakes there has been no major dispute along the 3,000 mile Canadian-American border. During more than a century when heavily fortified borders became the established practice, no fortifications were placed on this border, despite occasions of disagreement between the United States and Canada or Britain.

To commemorate this historically significant fact, the State of New York has created the War of 1812 Commission with Mrs. Chester B. Pond of South Bethlehem, New York as the chairman, Senator Earl W. Brydges of Niagara Falls, New York as vice chairman, and Hugh M. Flick, Associate Commissioner of Education, as secretary. Also appointed to the committee: Major General Almerin C. O'Hara, Loudonville, Dr. Harold G. Wilm, Loudonville, Dr. James E. Allen Jr., Loudonville, Emmet N. O'Brien, Delmar, Brigadier General Owen B. Augspurger, Buffalo, Herman H. Schwartz, Rochester, Paul P. Cohen, Buffalo, Dr. Foster S. Brown, Canton, Clinton W. Marsh, Watertown, Loren A. Schoff, Lowville, Robert C. Schutt, Grand Island, Richard C. Dewey, Tonawanda, Clarence O. Lewis, Lockport, Mrs. Dom (Margaret) Laurie, Lewiston, Mortimer Feuer, New York, Samuel J. Nachwalter, New York, Mrs. Robert W. Smith, Rochester, Mr. Richard T. Gilmartin, East Hampton, Dr. Marvin A. Rapp, Garden City, Mr. Robert West Howard, Rochester, Mrs. Mildred F. Taylor, Lyons, Mrs. Laura Y. Finehout, Fultonville.

Also being commemorated by this same State Commission is the 150th anniversary of the writing of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Francis Scott Key was on board the sloop *Minden* during the bombardment of the American Fort McHenry that guarded the approach to Bal-

timore on the day and night of September 13, 1814. Key had appeared before the British admiral seeking the release of Dr. William Beanes and was not allowed to return until after the battle. As day broke, Key saw the American flag still flying over Fort McHenry. Based on notes, he later wrote our national anthem.

Preserved for many years in the Smithsonian Institution, this banner was not adequately exhibited until 1964. Space has been provided in the newly opened Exhibits Building in Washington, D. C.; the flag as now displayed there is shown on the opposite page. Though the original manuscript of the anthem was lost by the printer, another draft was written shortly thereafter by Francis Scott Key.

The commemoration of the War of 1812 began on the Niagara Frontier with a luncheon in Buffalo on June 5, 1962 for the members of the Toronto and Buffalo City Councils, the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society and the Toronto Historical Board. In 1963 a luncheon for the organizations and officials was held in Toronto on April 27. Following the luncheon a plaque commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Battle of York and those who died there was dedicated.

On July 10, 1964 an exhibit, "The Military Heritage of the Niagara Frontier," was previewed by both organizations at the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society. On July 26, 1964 an international ceremony was held with a guard mount by the Lincoln and Welland Regiment and the 44th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery at Fort George, Ontario, and a review of a battalion of the 27th Armored Division at Old Fort Niagara, New York.

These events have marked a fitting observance of a period of international cooperation—an example of friendship and reciprocal relations which are of worldwide and timeless significance.

twenty-five hundred, on our side; and such it continued to be, through all the subsequent strife, to the end of the battle.

Again; as to the character of the troops and the nature of the position occupied by them. Three of the British Regiments had been detailed from the Peninsular Army; and the others were, probably, not surpassed, in discipline, by any troops of the British service. Being previously on the ground, they were enabled to select their own position, and secure to themselves every local advantage; and it was in the position thus chosen and occupied, that we attacked them. Yet, under all these circumstances—superiority of numbers and position, veteran service, experience, discipline, and *esprit de corps*—his left wing was driven back, with great loss, at the first onset; his right wing only for a time saved from the same fate, by the commanding influence of his battery and the strong position of his light troops, in the woods. Finally, in the second stage of the battle, his battery, the key of his position, was stormed and taken; his whole re-inforced line driven back; his own position occupied and held by us, in spite of the most determined efforts to retake it; and still held in undisputed possession, for nearly two hours, after those efforts had ceased. Will any one say that this was not a victory?

\* The following correspondence will not be without interest in this connection. It is referred to, in a marginal note of the lecturer, and is well authenticated:

“HEAD QUARTERS BUFFALO,  
“July 29, 1815.

“TO BRIG’R GEN PORTER &  
“BRIG’R GEN MILLER,  
“GENTLEMEN:

“Not a doubt existing on my  
“mind that the Enemy were defeated and driven from  
“the field of battle, on the 25th July last, near the Falls  
“of Niagara, leaving us in peaceable possession of all his  
“Artillery, I have, on all occasions, so stated.

“Learning that some diversity of opinion has appeared  
“upon this subject, so interesting to the Army, I have to  
“request of you, Gentlemen, to state your views regarding  
“it. You remained on the Field after I had left it, and  
“know if the Enemy did or did not appear when our  
“Army marched off, or if a gun was fired, for a consider-  
“able time before the Army moved, upon its taking up  
“the line of March, or on its way to Camp.

“I do not enquire of you who were the heroes of the  
“day, or which of the Corps particularly distinguished  
“themselves. But I call upon you to vindicate the fair  
“and honest fame of the Army which has done so much  
“to exalt our National character. Do not permit its rep-  
“utation to be tarnished by the faults or follies of its  
“Commanders. The victory was achieved by Americans  
“over the best troops of Britain; and the fact being es-  
“tablished is all that concerns the honor of the country or  
“the glory of her arms.

“Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

“JAC. BROWN.”

In the darkness of the night, it is true, we lost sight of the captured artillery; but that event can, in no degree, affect the historic reality of the enemy's complete repulse. It is easily accounted for, by the peculiar circumstances under which the battle was fought and the absorbing interest of the fight. The guns would have been a gratifying evidence of the result; but they are not the only evidence. The facts, as I have stated them, are corroborated by abundant testimony; and the absence of these trophies no more invalidates such testimony, than the absence of an incidental memorandum would impair the validity of a contract or a title similarly avouched.\*

“BUFFALO, 29th July, 1815.

“SIR:

“In answer to your letter of this date, we have no  
“hesitation in saying that, in our opinion, the character of  
“every incident attending the battle of Niagara Falls,  
“and particularly the mode of its termination, exhibits  
“clear and unequivocal evidence that it resulted in a de-  
“cided victory on the part of the American Army.

“We found the enemy in possession of a commanding  
“eminence, in the centre of open and extensive fields,  
“without any woods, ravines, or other cover sufficiently  
“near to favour an attack, and supported by a Battery of  
“9 pieces of field ordnance. From this position they  
“were driven at the point of the Bayonet, with the loss  
“of all his Artillery. After our Army had possessed itself  
“of their position and Artillery, the Enemy received rein-  
“forcements, and made not less than three deliberate,  
“well-arranged, and desperate charges to regain them; in  
“each of which he was driven back in confusion, with the  
“loss of many prisoners; but the darkness of the night  
“and the surrounding woods did not permit our Army to  
“avail itself, as it might, under other circumstances, of  
“these repeated successes. The Battle commenced a  
“little before sunset and terminated a little before or  
“near eleven o'clock. After the Enemy appeared, the last  
“time, they exhibited evidences of great confusion by  
“distant scattering firing in the woods; and our Troops  
“were drawn up, in great order, on the field of Battle,  
“forming three sides of a hollow square, with the whole  
“of our own and the Enemy's Artillery in the centre.

“In this situation we remained for more than an hour,  
“and in our opinion the Troops were in a condition to act  
“with more decisive effect than at any former period of  
“the contest. During this interval, we do not recollect to  
“have heard a gun, or seen any other indication of the  
“Enemy being near us; and at the close of it the Army  
“retired slowly to camp, without any molestation by, or  
“the appearance of, a foe. We left on the field the En-  
“emy's Artillery and other trophies of Victory, which  
“were, at the time of our leaving it, and had been for a  
“long time before, in our undisputed possession.

“We are, Sir, very respectfully

“Your obt Servants

“PETER B. PORTER.

“JAMES MILLER.

“To Maj Gen'l BROWN.”

The British commander, in accounting for the length and severity of the conflict, quoted the force opposed to him at five thousand men, and gave us credit for a more than ordinary share of gallantry, on that estimate. "It cannot escape "observation," says the annalist of *Dodsley's Annual Register*, in speaking of this battle, "that, although British valour and discipline "were *finally* triumphant, the improvement of "the American troops, in these qualities, was "eminently conspicuous." Such is the language of British historians, on the supposition that our force was five thousand strong. What should be the language of impartial history, when it is verified that we were, in fact, less than half that number? And yet there have not been wanting Americans!—shall I not say *recreant* Americans?—who, for the gratification of their personal malevolence, have defamed and disparaged this battle, in almost every particular.

"The darkness of the night, during this extraordinary conflict," I quote, in part, the language of General Drummond, "occasioned "several uncommon incidents—gunners' implements and accoutrements were interchanged; "British guns limbered up on American limbers, and vice versa." Corps sometimes intermingled friends and enemies, in the strangest confusion. In one instance, a line was seen forming up, in order of battle, supposed to be one of our own Regiments; and an American Staff-officer, riding close up, inquired "What "Regiment is that?" "The Royal Scots, "Sir," was the prompt reply. It was by an error similar to this, that General Riall and his whole Staff fell into the hands of the Twenty-fifth Regiment.\*

A few minutes before Miller's attack upon the British battery, I was in company with a large number of Staff-officers, in the road, near his right flank, waiting the result. We were nearly in the position which had been occupied, in the early part of the battle, by the British Forty-first. A non-commissioned officer, whose

badges and uniform I could not, of course, see, approached me, and with the appropriate salute, recovering his musket, said: "Lieutenant-colonel Gordon begs to have the three hundred "men, who are stationed in the lane, below, "sent to him, as quick as possible, for he is "very much pressed." He was beyond arms-length, and I affected not to hear him distinctly; whereupon he came nearer and repeated the message. Much to his astonishment, I seized his musket and drew it over my horse's neck. The man could not comprehend the action. "And what have I done, Sir? I'm no deserter. "God save the King, and dom the Yankees."

It was past twelve o'clock, at night, when I arrived in camp, and proceeded to make the necessary preparation for the anticipated duties of the following day. To this end, my own little encampment was changed from the bank of the Niagara to a more commanding position, on the left; my guns placed regularly in battery; the furniture, equipments, and munitions inspected and arranged, for instant service; and, in this attitude, we bivouacked for the night.

The din of battle had ceased, for some time, when the troops returned from the field and, immediately, betook themselves to the rest and refreshment of which it may be supposed they stood greatly in need. In consequence of the omission to bring off the captured artillery and the deep regret universally felt, on that account, orders were presently issued, by General Brown, to return, with as little delay as possible, to the field; and, at a very early hour, therefore, part of the troops were again in motion, for this purpose.\* The inevitable delays of that movement, however, were such, that the enemy were found already posted on a strong position, near the Falls, when our troops arrived in that neighborhood; and, finding from some prisoners, that further reinforcements had arrived, during the night, General Ripley, after skirmishing with the out-posts, till about eleven o'clock, returned slowly to camp.

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\* General Riall, with his Staff, was captured by one of Major Jessup's flanking parties, under Captain Ketchum.

It is said that an Aid of General Riall, mistaking the Company for British soldiery, and observing that they obstructed the way, called out, "Make room there, men, for "General Riall." At which Captain Ketchum, seeing a party follow the officer, at the distance of a few horse lengths, promptly responded, "Aye, Aye, Sir," and suffered the Aid to ride quietly on. As the General, with his Staff, approached, they found the passage intercepted by an armed force, which closed instantly upon them, with fixed bayonets; their bridles were seized; and they were politely requested to dismount. "What does all this

"mean?" said the astonished General. "You are prisoners, Sir," was the answer. "But I am General Riall!" he said. "There is no doubt, on that point," replied the Captain; "and I, Sir, am Captain Ketchum, of the United "States Army."

The General, seeing that resistance was useless, quietly surrendered, remarking, in a kind of half soliloquy, "Captain Ketchum! Ketchum! Well! you *have* caught us! "sure enough!"

\* There were upwards of seven hundred effective men in camp, whose services in the field of Lundy's-lane had not been called for, and who did not even *see* the action.



*The port of Buffalo, on Lake Erie in 1815, from a steel engraving in the "Port Folio" of that year.*

My object in saying this is not to disparage the Commander last named, but to account for a fact.

Change in command, not unfrequently, produces change in the course of action, and so it was, in this case ; and it is interesting to observe, in passing, how, after all, an unseen Providence guides and shapes all our ends, rough hew them how we will. Had the command descended but one step, no one would have apprehended any change in the character of the Campaign, as to enterprise, however many might regret—and, probably, none more than General Scott, to whom the command would have descended—the absence of the cool, deliberate sagacity of General Brown, in the councils of the Army. Had it descended three steps, to General P. B. Porter, very nearly the same result would apply, with nearly the same force. In either case, the question would be, whether the army should be reinforced, on the battle-ground, at the Falls, or occupy its position, at Chippewa. Nor, can it be doubted that, with the aid of the captured artillery, manned and munitioned by us, it would have been in our power to maintain the position, so

taken, against any possible assault, on the part of the enemy. Such I happen to know was the unhesitating counsel of General Porter and of one, if not both, of the Field-officers of Engineers ; and it was precisely in this policy that I was sent, towards the close of the battle, to prepare my command for the exigencies of the following day.

In the new state of things, however, a more cautious policy was adopted. General Ripley, having completed the reconnaissances of which I have spoken, on the day following the battle, and returned to camp, determined, not without much opposition from the ablest counsellors of the army, to retire upon Fort Erie, and take position, either at that place or on the heights opposite Black-rock. The Engineers opposing every part of this movement, were understood, of course, to prefer the latter to the former. The final question appears to have been settled in favor of the position at Fort Erie, during the march ; and, about eleven o'clock, on the evening of the twenty-sixth, we arrived in the vicinity of the fort, and bivouacked for the night. The men slept where and how they could ; and,

too tired to be over fastidious, I stretched myself upon the first camp-waggon I saw, which, when I turned up the canvass cover, on the following morning, proved to have been loaded with pickaxes, spades, crowbars, and various other tools and mining implements.

It was foreseen, by those who opposed this movement, that it would be seized upon by the British General, as giving color to an extravagant and unfounded pretension in regard to the recent battle; and so it turned out. In the same dispatch in which he claims the victory, on the field of Niagara, he has endeavored to characterize this movement as the disorderly flight of a beaten army.

"The retreat," says a recent British historian,\* "was continued to Fort Erie, with such precipitation, that the whole baggage, provisions, and camp-equipage were thrown into the Rapids, and precipitated over the awful cataract of Niagara!" An awful affair, truly, if it had really happened, anywhere, except in the imagination of the historian. As matter of history, I assure you there is not a particle of truth in it.†

The movement, in proper military phrase, would, doubtless, be called a retreat. But it was not a disorderly nor a precipitate retreat. It was not, in any sense, *compulsory*, for we might have lain, any length of time, behind the Chippewa, in spite of the efforts of our enemy to dislodge us. But, in the situation in which we were left, after the battle, diminished in numbers while the enemy had been greatly reinforced, it was thought to be a question, not whether we *could* defend ourselves, but whether we could *protect our depots*, at Buffalo, and our line of communication, at so great a distance from them. In other words, the motive of the retreat was strategical, having regard to the general scheme of operations; not tactical, or evolutionary, having regard to the strength of a certain position or the relative force of the two armies. It was preceded by a forced reconnaissance, on our part, in which the enemy's outposts were driven in, at the distance of almost three miles from our camp. Nor did the British General advance from that position, even as far as the village of Chippewa, till the second day after. There was no pursuit—no hanging upon our flanks or rear—no enemy visible, in any quarter. The march was as quiet as if it had passed through a portion of our own territory. It was undertaken with perfect deliberation, and performed without the slightest disorder, of any kind.

Four days after the battle, General Drummond was reinforced, in addition to all his other reinforcements, with twelve hundred men of De

Watteville's Brigade; and *then*, for the first time, he ventured beyond Chippewa-bridge. Finally, when he did show himself, at Fort Erie, on the sixth day after the battle, with more than double our numbers, instead of driving us into the lake, at the point of the bayonet, which, consistently with his vain-glorious dispatches he ought certainly to have done, what did he do? He kept at a most respectful distance, beyond cannon-shot, and only approached us in fact with the cautious operations of a regular siege.

It was before superior numbers, then, under a view of general policy, not by defeat or compulsion, that the army retired; and the British General, however he may have stooped to win laurels at our expense, in paper dispatches, showed plainly enough, by his conduct in the field, that the crown of victory was, in reality, none of his.

At the dawn of day, on the morning of the twenty-seventh, I had, for the first time, a survey of our position, of which, by reason of the darkness of the night, I had been prevented taking note, the evening before. The spot on which I stood was a hillock, partly natural and partly formed by the ruins of an old lime-kiln, between the fort and the lake, nearest the latter, eight or ten feet above the water-level, and about as much below the site of the fort. And here I immediately arranged a place for the encampment of my particular command. The different Corps and Regiments began, at the same time, to assume the order of a regular encampment, chiefly on the left of the fort, and extending, from it, towards a high, commanding hillock, called Snake-hill, about half a mile up the Lake, near the shore.

Before I proceed with any detail of events at Fort Erie, allow me to point out the difference between the Fort Erie of which I am now to speak and the little work which was taken by us, at the opening of the Campaign. The latter, as I have intimated in my former Lecture, was a small quadrangular fort, partly finished, and not capable of containing a garrison of more than two or three hundred men, at the utmost.

After it fell into our hands, on the third of July, and until the the twenty-sixth, when we returned to it, the American garrison had been engaged in improving and completing its defences, as a mere fort; but, of course, without any idea of the neighboring ground being occupied by the army at large; nor had any works, with reference to such an occupancy, been laid out or contemplated in the labors of the garri-

\* Allison.

† "It is, indeed, barely possible that some barrels of

"bad mess-beef or damaged biscuit may have been thrown into the Niagara."—*Major Douglass*.

son. The Fort Erie of the siege, now to be spoken of, was rather an intrenched camp, having the proper fort, indeed, for one of its strong points, but extending, for more than half a mile from it, along the lake-shore, with numerous other redoubts and batteries; and embracing an area sufficient for the accommodation of two or three thousand men.\* With this explanation, I now go back in my narrative to the night of our arrival, when none of these works existed, save Fort Erie, proper.

While the first arrangements were in progress, I had a special duty to perform. One of my guns had broken down, the preceding evening, near Black-rock-ferry; and a detachment of the Company, with a spare limber and plenty of rope and extra draught-horses, was made ready, early in the morning, to go down and bring it in. At the moment of my departure, I was summoned into the presence of the Commandant of Artillery, and severely reprimanded, for having left the gun in that situation. I replied that I had done so by direction of my own Commander, having reported the fact to him, at the time. "Yes," he said, "but if the gun falls into the hands of the enemy, I have an accountability, too." "That," I said, "is impossible. I put it in the care of the rear-guard; and, besides, I am just going down, to bring it in." What peculiar difficulty he saw in this, or whether he was moved by the very juvenile appearance of the speaker, I know not; but he did not hesitate to treat my proposition as absurd and ridiculous; and I left him, meditating *revenge*. Two hours gave it to me. The gun, by that time, was safely brought into camp, weighing about fifty hundred-weights; and, in two hours more, it was safely mounted on another axletree, without the aid of machinery. The Commander came down to see me, at the close of the operation, and very frankly made his acknowledgment, giving me, in the fullest manner, his esteem and confidence, ever after.

On the twenty-eighth and following days of the month, the order of the encampment having been duly adjusted and the troops refreshed, the works of intrenchment were commenced. The ground-plan of a battery, for the extreme right of the position, was traced on the lime-kiln occupied by the Sappers and Miners, and immediately commenced by them. Another, of larger dimensions and in bolder relief, was laid out, on Snake-hill, on the extreme left; and a fatigue party, of several hundred men, was placed under my directions, for *its* construction. The

intermediate ground, between Snake-hill and the fort, was, at the same time, laid out in a system of breastworks and batteries, to be thrown up by the Regimental fatigue parties and Artillery, each in front of its respective Regiment and Corps; and a breastwork, also, in front of the Ninth Regiment, between my battery and Fort Erie.

As late as the morning of the thirtieth, the enemy had not yet made his appearance, in our immediate neighborhood. In the course of that day, however, a patrol of British Dragoons was discovered, by one of our scouting-parties, below Black-rock-ferry; and, in the early part of the night following, a larger detachment ascended as far as the ferry, and seized some of the boats which had been left there. It was about the middle of the night, that I was awakened, in my tent, by the Chief Engineer, and informed of this capture, with the caution to be on the alert, as my position was exposed, in the direction of the enemy. He also directed me to place one or two additional guns in the bastion of Fort Erie, commanding the approach, from below. The elevation of the bastion, and the narrow, cramped passage by which it communicated with the fort, rendered this a work of some difficulty. A succession of inclined planes had to be erected. We began the work, however, about one o'clock, with the Sappers and Miners constructing; and, at reveille-beating, two guns were wheeled into their places, in readiness for action.

The approach of the enemy, of course, stimulated our labors, in the trenches; and the soldiers were turned out, almost *en masse*, to work upon them. But it was yet many days before they were sufficiently matured to have given the least hindrance to an attacking enemy; and that General Drummond, with his great superiority of force, did not attack us, in that situation, is only to be accounted for, by assigning to the Battle of Niagara its true character, as a signal and impressive victory, on our part.

It was about the first of August, when the British appeared in force, on the heights opposite Black-rock. On the second, at evening, my own little battery, though not quite finished, was platformed, and the guns mounted. I made my bed on the platform, that night; and, for many weeks afterwards, took no rest, except on the trailed handspikes of one of the guns, with an old tent spread upon them, and wrapped in a horseman's cloak.\* By great exertions, the battery on the

\* See the accompanying map and description at the end of this Lecture.

\* In a letter dated "FORT ERIE, Sept. 12, 1814," the Lecturer thus speaks of the Douglass Battery:

"I cannot avoid giving you some account of it. It was

"originally a sort of arched vault or magazine, raised above ground, and opening towards the water. In the course of one night, I dug away one side into a loose sort of platform, and placed my gun there, having squared the top a little, so as to give it the appearance of

left was advanced so as to receive a part of its armament, on the third. It was occupied by Towson's Artillery; and was called, afterwards, by his name. On the morning of the same day, the British, for the first time, made their appearance in the edge of the bushes, on the right, within sight of the fort; apparently a reconnoitering party, covered by a body of Indians and light troops. I pointed a couple of guns upon them, and fired the first myself; which was the first gun of a cannonade, which lasted, with very little intermission, from that time to the seventeenth of September, following. The British party was, of course, scattered, immediately, and retreated, with precipitation, under cover of the woods, the Indians making the welkin ring again, with the shrill notes of the war-whoop.

The British had not yet any regular battery to open upon us; but they posted two or three twenty-four-pounders among some sycamore bushes, on a salient point of the lake-shore, below, so as to rake part of our camp and fire into two man-of-war schooners, which were moored opposite. The firing was returned, from my battery, and also from one of the schooners; and, between us, according to the report of the man at the mast-head of the schooner, one of the enemy's guns was dismantled, in the course of the afternoon. †

On the fourth of the month, General Gaines arrived in camp, and took the command; General Ripley remaining as second. The firing, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth of August, on the part of the enemy, was inconsiderable; and we learned that he had thrown himself forward, under cover of the woods, and was there busily engaged in constructing his batteries. We fired upon them, occasionally, to annoy and retard them, as much as possible, in the prosecution of this work; but, of course, it availed little. The first battery was completed and unmasked; and, on the morning of the seventh, a

little after sunrise, it opened upon us, with a volley from five pieces, at the distance of about nine hundred yards from our works.

We had heard them cutting, during the night, for the purpose of unmasking this battery; and knew, very well, what we had to expect, in the morning. A little after day-light, therefore, the troops were paraded, with colors, as for a grand field-day; the national standard was displayed at every flag-staff; as soon as the first volley from the enemy was received, the Regimental Bands of the entire army commenced playing the most animating national airs; and, in the midst of it, a salvo of artillery was fired from every piece which could be brought to bear upon the hostile position.

From this time, the cannonade became severe and unremitting, on both sides; and, as the shot of the enemy passed lengthwise, through our camp, it became necessary to dispose the tents in small groups, along the line of the entrenchment, and to erect massive embankments, (called traverses) transversely, for their protection. The most secluded places were selected for the horses and spare carriages of the Park, for the tents of the Hospital department, and for the parade and inspection of the guards. Yet, notwithstanding all these precautions, scarcely a day passed without considerable loss; and the annoyances were incessant. Shots fired with very small charges and great elevations—the ricochet firing of Vauban—were made to fall into the areas between the traverses, and, sometimes, to knock over a whole range of tents, at a single stroke. Others, glancing against accidental obstacles, were thrown off into oblique and transverse directions, producing the same effect. No spot was entirely safe. A Sergeant, under the apparent protection of one of the traverses, was getting himself shaved to go on guard; a chance shot, glancing obliquely, took off his head and the hand of the operator, at

“ a parapet. After one day's brisk cannonade, I found that I had blown away the earth that remained on the top, and set fire to the timbers that constituted the arch. I immediately set the Bombardiers to work; cut away the logs, entirely; filled up the cavities of the vault; and formed it into a very decent breastwork. I planked the platform, also, at the same time. A few days afterwards, I connected it, on the left, to the breastwork which had been raised, on that side, by the Ninth Regiment.

“ In this state it remained, for some time, until about a week since (early in September) when I began to devise some plan to keep the Bombardiers comfortable, as the nights grew cold; for, hitherto, we had all slept together, around the gun. On the right of the platform, the ground had a considerable descent; and here I set all hands to work, as near the gun as possible. In a few days, they had made a sort of cellar, ten feet broad and twenty feet long, neatly and firmly walled up with sods.

“ Adjoining this, they dug another similar one, walled in the same way. I caused the whole to be covered with a layer of logs; the cracks to be filled up with good mortar; and a second layer of logs to be placed over this. The men live in the large part and I in the smaller. I can enjoy the occasional privilege of a candle, in the evening; while those who live in tents are obliged to put out their lights, soon after dark. We are perfectly secure from any kind of annoyance the enemy can send against us; and, on the whole, they are considered about the most comfortable quarters in camp.”

† “ Aug. 6th, 1814. In the evening, an officer of the Navy came with some Field-officers of the Army, to see me, telling me I had made some of the finest shots he ever saw. This, you may suppose, would make an ambitious young soldier feel very vain.”—*Letter from the Author.*

the same moment. These chance shots, however, though of frequent occurrence, were not often thus destructive of life, as they occurred mostly in the daytime, when the men were engaged on the works. There, great pains were taken to protect the laborers, by keeping a man on the watch. But, even with all these precautions, the shots often eluded our safeguards, and fell among the working-parties, with terrible effect. In spite of it all, however, the works were carried on with vigor and steadiness; and, by the tenth, the battery on Snake-hill—Towson's-battery—was completed and occupied, in full force. The line of breastworks, between Snake-hill and Fort Erie, including two other batteries, was also in a state of forwardness; and the intrenchments of the extreme right, between the fort and my battery, though, from accidental causes, less advanced, were yet capable of making a very considerable resistance. In addition to the intrenchments here spoken of, the extreme left, from Towson's-battery to the water, was closed with a very well constructed abattis;\* and a similar construction was added, on some of the more exposed parts of the intrenchment, at other points.

The enemy, in the meanwhile, was still receiving, from time to time, further reinforcements. On the sixth and seventh of August, simultaneously with the opening of their first battery, we were given to understand that two fresh Regiments had joined them, making their aggregate strength a little more than five thousand men; and the expectation was, of course, excited, that we should have a desperate attack, from them, without much further delay. In anticipation of this attack, the men were distributed, for night-service, in three watches; one to be on duty, under arms; and the other two to lie down in their accoutrements, with arms at hand, so as to be ready for action, at a moment's notice. In the batteries, the guns were carefully charged afresh, every evening, with round-shot, grape, or canister, either, or all together, as the case might require; dark lanterns burning; with linstocks and other instruments in their places, ready for instant use. In my own battery, in addition to other missiles, bags of musket-balls had been quilted up, in the fragments of an old tent, adapted to the calibre of the different pieces, and made ready for use.

A week at length transpired, in this state of expectation and uncertainty—the British frequently exchanging their guns and their men on duty, so as to keep up, without intermission or

relaxation, the vigor of their cannonade. On the fourteenth, one of their shells entered a small ammunition-chest, in one of the outworks of Fort Erie, and blew it up. Neither the chest nor its contents were of much consequence to us, though it was to be expected that the enemy, watchful for every advantage, however small, would so regard it; and, accordingly, as soon as the sound of the explosion reached him, it was greeted with three hearty cheers, by his whole line; to which ours, not to be outdone, in anything, immediately responded in three equally hearty. One of their shots, also, a few minutes after, cut away the halyards of one of our flag-staffs and lowered the flag. It was almost instantly restored; but the omen was thought too good a one to pass unnoticed; and three cheers were again given and responded to, in like manner as before. These incidents, and a few others likely to be construed as advantages gained, on the part of the besiegers, gave us a strong assurance that an attack would be attempted, in the course of the following night.

Immediately after nightfall, the lines were all visited by the commanding General, in person, and a special admonition addressed to the officers, of every grade, to be watchful and vigilant, in the certain expectation of an assault. The Chief Engineer and various Staff-officers, also, made the rounds, at later hours, and gave such directions and counsel to the different Commanders, as the occasion seemed to require. "Be prompt and energetic" was the caution of the Chief Engineer to myself, "for you may be assured that, whatever else they may do, *this* will be "one of their points of attack." Thus cautioned, we were not likely to be taken by surprise. The usual proportion of men and a larger than usual proportion of officers were on post, during the night; and the residue, though sleeping, were fully equipped and ready for action.

The early part of the night, after nine o'clock, passed with unusual calmness; and this—doubtless intended to lull us into security—was deemed a further indication of the hostile purpose of the enemy. Midnight at length came; and the hour after was still undisturbed and calm; till, towards two o'clock, it began to be doubtful whether our apprehension had not been excited upon insufficient grounds. I was reclining on my camp-bed, at this hour, and, being somewhat wearied with long watching and strong emotion, I gradually resigned myself to sleep. I was

\* The Abattis is a defence constructed chiefly of rows of saplings and the tops and large boughs of trees. The ends of the branches are first lopped off, so as to leave stiff points. The trees are then piled with their tops turned from the fortification; and are secured by laying

heavy timbers along the rows of trunks. The assailant, therefore, is both exposed to his enemy's fire and obliged to penetrate in the face of these innumerable bristling points, which are often made more impracticable by entwining with them thorns, cat-briars, and the like. —D.B.A.

unconscious of the interval that elapsed: it seemed, in sleeping, much longer than it could have been, in fact. But, at length—whether it were a reality or only the confused imagination of a broken dream, I could not; at first, tell—the report of a musket seemed to fall upon my ear, followed by a hurried volley of eight or ten similar reports, immediately after. Whether it were fancy or fact, however, was of little account; my physical energies were roused into action, even before my will was awake; and, by the time I was fairly conscious, I was already on my feet and at my post. Another volley was now distinctly heard, on the far left. It was no dream: the hour of attack had come: and the cry “To arms!” “To arms!” hastily given along the line of tents, awakened the reserve, and brought them into line, in almost as little time as I have employed in narrating.

I think an entire minute could not have elapsed, after the first alarm, before the close double ranks of the Ninth Regiment were formed, upon my left, with bayonets fixed, ready for the battle. My own trusty corps, familiarized, by daily use and constant vigilance, were in their places; the primers had already done their work, and were holding their hands over the priming, to protect it from dampness; while the firemen, opening their dark lanterns, were in the act of lighting their slow matches.

\* \* \* \* \*

The firing which had given the alarm, was that of the picket-guard, on the extreme left, indicating the approach of the British right column, on that point. The picket-guard, in this instance, behaved well, loading and firing several times with considerable effect, as it retired; so that, by the time it made good its retreat, our troops were in perfect readiness for the reception of the enemy.

The line, from Towson's-battery to the water, was occupied, at this time, by the Twenty-first Regiment, commanded by my gallant friend, Colonel Wood, privileged here, as elsewhere, to be always first in action. About two minutes after, we—on the right—were in our places, the Twenty-first was already hotly engaged with the enemy, and its position, marked by an illumination of exquisite brilliancy, shining far up in the dark, cloudy atmosphere which hung over us; while the battery, on its right, elevated some twenty feet above the level, was lighted up with a blaze of artillery fires, which gained for it, after that night, the appellation of “Towson's light-house.” To the ear, the reports of musketry and artillery were blended together, in one continuous roar, somewhat like the close double drag of a drum, on a grand scale.

While the battle was thus raging, on the extreme left, a volley of small-arms, followed by a

rapid running fire and occasional discharges of artillery, were heard on that part of the intrenchment just South of, and joining, the fort, indicating the approach of an enemy, also, on that quarter.

All yet remained quiet in front of us, till the suspense began to be painful, and the inquiry was impatiently made, “Why don't the lazy rascals make haste!” That they would fail to come, no one, for a moment, entertained the thought. We had seen the signal rockets thrown up, from their right column, at the eve of its approach, and answered from the edge of the woods, in our front; and we knew, as well as they did, what was the meaning of it. The assurance, given by Colonel McRea to myself, that “Whatsoever else they do, *this* will be one of their points of attack,” was, in my mind, almost without the shadow of a doubt, that it was soon to be realized. Yet the intensity of the fire had begun to abate, on the left, and still nothing was heard or seen, in front of us. Hundreds of eyes were gazing intently through the darkness, towards the well known position of the picket-guard, some four hundred yards in advance. Ears were laid to the ground, to catch the first impression of a footfall; but the darkness and the stillness of the night were, as yet, in *our* front, unbroken. At last a sound came—apparently, three or four men, running or walking, quickly, in the direction of the fort. “Who comes there?” was shouted from several voices at once. A slight pause ensued; and then “the picket-guard,” was the rather timid reply. I cannot repeat the terrible volley of imprecations to which this announcement gave rise: “Go back to your post, you infamous cowardly poltroons! Go back! this instant, or we'll fire upon you.” It was, probably, only a few stragglers from the picket-guard, or, at least, not the whole of them; for, within a minute after and long before these men could have reached their position, if they went back, a flash *was* seen, in the proper position of the guard; and the simultaneous report of five or six muskets gave us the signal for which we had been looking so anxiously.

And now were all eyes and ears doubly intent; for we soon began to hear the measured tread of the dense columns, approaching; the suppressed voices of the officers giving words of command and caution—“Close up”—“Steady! men”—“Steady! men”—“Steel”—“Captain Steel's Company”—and other like words, the meaning of which I shall explain, presently. A brief pause being still permitted, for the retreat of the picket-guard, the darkness and silence of the night were *darkness* and *silence* no longer.

At a given instant, as if by a concerted signal, the fires broke forth; and were immediately in

full play, along the whole line of batteries and intrenchments, from the water to the fort, inclusive.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was now near *three* o'clock. The firing had greatly abated, on the further left; and it was soon understood that the enemy's column had been repulsed, at all points, on that quarter. Their attack had been chiefly confined to the abattis, between Towson's-battery and the water, defended, as I have remarked, by the Twenty-first Regiment and the artillery of Towson's-battery; and, though conducted with great gallantry; and long persevered in, it was steadily and constantly repulsed. The enemy had been rallied, several times, and brought back to the assault, after being repulsed; but always with the same result. In the darkness of the night, they tried to deceive our people into a belief that they were firing upon their own men. A part of the column even waded out into the lake, to get around the left flank of the abattis; but the Twenty-first was ready for them, and received them, as prisoners, as fast as they reached the shore—finally, an offensive movement, on our part, threatening the flank of the attacking party, completed their repulse; and, after a running fight, of short duration, the ground in front of the Twenty-first was restored to our possession, and the picket-guard reposted.

The firing, on the immediate left of the fort, had also begun to subside at the period of the action to which we have now arrived. It was, in fact, a mere feint—an expedient, on the part of the enemy, to deceive us as to his real point of attack. The interest of the whole battle was *now*, therefore, transferred to Fort Erie, proper, and the extreme right. These points had been approached by the enemy, in two columns—one, moving on the level of the esplanade of the fort, for the attack of that work; and the other, along the lake-shore, on the level of my battery. The first was received by the artillery-fires of the fort and detachments of the Nineteenth and Rifle Regiments, stationed in and about it—too small an amount of musketry, doubtless, for the occasion, as we shall presently notice—the second, by the guns of my battery, with the musketry of a detachment of New York Volunteers, on the right, and of the Ninth Regiment on the left.

The darkness of the night prevented us seeing the precise effect of our fires; but the ground was familiar to us, and we had no difficulty in giving the proper elevation and direction to the guns. The cannon were loaded, habitually, for short quarters. They were filled with round-shot, grape, canister, and bags of musket-balls, at discretion, till I could touch the last wad, with my hand, in the muzzle of the piece.

The firing, on our part, had continued in this way, for some time; when a mysterious and confused sound of tumult, in the salient bastion of the fort, just above us, was followed by the cessation of the artillery-fires, at that point; and presently a command was addressed to us, on the level below, by some one on the platform, calling, in a loud voice and tone of authority, "Cease firing! You're firing upon your own men." The foreignness of the accent, however, betrayed the person and purpose of the speaker. The firing did, indeed, slacken, for a moment, and the column, in front, as we afterwards learned, was about to take advantage of it; but the reaction was short. Another voice was presently heard above the tumult, commanding, in a different strain, and with no foreign accent—"Go to H—. Fire away there, why don't you?" and so we did, with more animation than ever. Some of the guns of the bastion being charged with grape-shot, were then turned and fired upon us, and a rambling fire of musketry was kept up, for a short time, from the same point; all indicating that the bastion had most surely been carried, and was now in the hands of the enemy. An old stone building, however, overlooked the bastion, and separated it from the inner fortifications, by a narrow passage, which the enemy could not penetrate. A detachment of the Nineteenth Infantry had been stationed in this building; and we now saw, by the increased animation of the fires, from the windows and loop-holes of the second story, that it had been reinforced, for the purpose of reacting against the enemy, in the bastion.

A firing was heard, at the same time, from a remoter part of the interior of the fort; playing, with great animation, for a while, and then ceasing; and so, with varied intensity, for some time. It was evident that a strife of no common sort was going on, in that quarter, but with what effect, our engagements in front did not permit us to enquire.

Nearly an hour elapsed, in this kind of warfare: volleys of musketry, with an occasional clang of other weapons, within the fort; while the line with which I was particularly connected was hotly engaged with the enemy's column, in front. The aim of this last was to pass our breast-works, with scaling-ladders, or to penetrate the open spaces; and, though he had not succeeded in reaching these points, we had reason to know that he had, several times, renewed the attempt, and was only, in fact, finally repulsed, as the day began to dawn. The remnants of this column then joined the British reserve, near the woods; and the guns of the "Douglass Battery" were turned so as to take across the salient point of the contested bastion, to intercept communications or succors. The

bastion itself was still in the possession of the enemy; but it was understood that they were not only unable to penetrate further, but that they had been terribly cut up by the fires from the block-house and other adjacent parts of the fort and outworks.

Several charges had been made upon them; but, owing to the narrowness of the passage and the height of the platform, they had, as yet, been unsuccessful. Another party, however, it was said, of picked men, was now just organized, with the hope of a better result. To this enterprise, then—the only thing now remaining to complete the repulse of the enemy—the attention of every beholder was most anxiously bent. The firing within the fort had already begun to slacken, as if to give place to the charging-party: the next moment was to give us the clang of weapons, in deadly strife. But, suddenly, every sound was hushed by the sense of an unnatural tremor, beneath our feet, like the first heave of an earthquake; and, almost at the same instant, the centre of the bastion burst up, with a terrific explosion; and a jet of flame, mingled with fragments of timber, earth, stone, and bodies of men, rose, to the height of one or two hundred feet, in the air, and fell, in a shower of ruins, to a great distance, all around. One of my men was killed by the falling timber.

\* \* \* \* \*

The battle is over; the day had now fully broke; but, oh God! what a scene! At every point where the battle had raged, were strewed the melancholy vestiges of the recent terrible conflict. There is the ruined bastion, the scene of such desperate strife, smoking with the recent explosion, and, all around it, the ground covered with the bodies of the dead and wounded—the former in every stage and state of mutilation. Near the bastion, lay the dead body of a noble looking man, Colonel Drummond, the leader of the British charge, at that point: his countenance was stern, fixed, and commanding, in death. In front of our fires, between the bastion and the water, the ground was literally *piled* with dead. Within forty yards of my battery, a sword was found and handed me, still attached to the belt, which was stained with blood, and evidently had been cut away from the body of the owner, who could not be found and probably had been carried off the field. Of his rank, therefore, we could but conjecture; though the peculiarity of its shape and workmanship has since led me to suppose that it might have belonged to the leader of the One hundred and third Regiment, Colonel Scott, who was killed at the head of the enemy's left

column.\*

It became my duty, as an Engineer, to overhaul and repair the ruins; and, as soon as the action was decided, I was called upon to re-lay the platform of the ruined bastion. The whole bastion and its immediate neighborhood were heaped with dead and desperately wounded; while bodies and fragments of bodies were scattered on the ground, in every direction. More than a hundred bodies were removed from the ruin, before I could proceed with the work; and, soon after, to heighten the misery of the scene, it began to rain, violently.

Several hours were employed in carefully disengaging the wounded and burnt from the ruins: those who were yet alive were sent to the care of the Army Surgeons; while the dead bodies were passed over the embankment. While the repairs were in progress, the parties detailed for the purpose excavated large graves, a little distance without the fortification, and gathered the dead, who were buried, forty and fifty together, side by side, with the honors of War. How little do those who quietly read the papers know of the real calamities of War!

It is not difficult to account for the cause of the explosion, in the bastion. The magazine [*ammunition-chest?*] was under the platform, and quite open. In the haste and ardor with which the guns were served, during the action, and in the confusion of the *melee*, some cartridges were doubtless broken and the powder strewed around, forming a train, or succession of trains, connecting with the magazine, which a burning wad or the discharge of a musket might easily ignite. As to its effect in deciding the contest, it was very small, if anything. The British General found it very convenient to assign the explosion as the chief cause of the failure of the enterprise; but he had been completely repulsed, with dreadful carnage, at all points, *before* the explosion. The British troops, in the bastion, were unable to advance, one step. Their Commander was killed. Their numbers were momentarily thinned, by our fires; and so completely were they cut up and disabled, that, of those removed from the ruins of the bastion, but a very few were free from severe gunshot wounds. Indeed, had the explosion been a few minutes later, the whole of their reserve would probably have been intercepted and cut off, by a strong detachment, which was in motion, for that purpose.

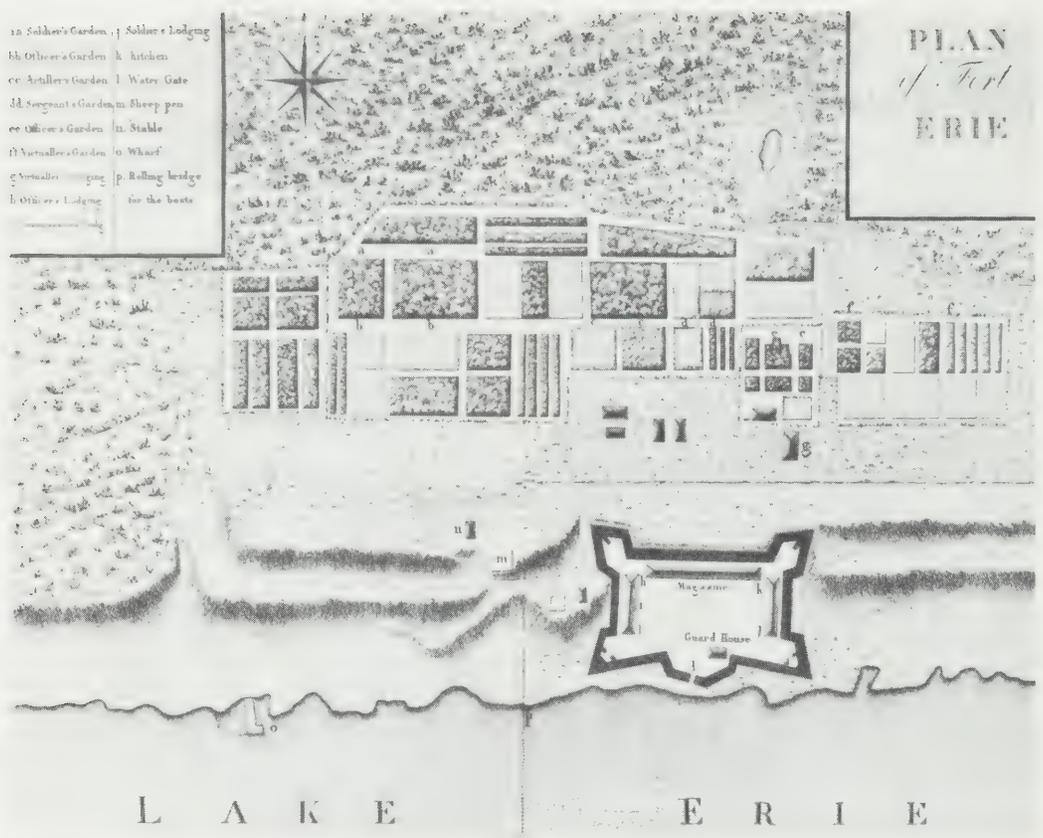
The loss of the enemy, by this engagement, in killed, wounded, and prisoners, could not have been less than eleven to twelve hundred. Nine

\* The sword is still in the possession of the lecturer's family. The hilt is a plain but servicable one; the blade is very much curved, and handsomely worked with the

arms and shields of England, Scotland, and Ireland. A scroll work, near the hilt, is inscribed with "THE 103RD REGIMENT."

- aa Soldier's Garden ; j Soldier's Lodging
- bb Officer's Garden k Kitchen
- cc Artillery Garden l Water Gate
- dd Sergeant's Garden m Sheep pen
- ee Officer's Garden n Stable
- ff Victuallers' Garden o Wharf
- g Victuallers' lodging p Rolling bridge for the boats
- h Officers' Lodging

PLAN  
of Fort  
ERIE



*Plan of Fort Erie. aa Soldier's garden; bb Officers' garden; cc Artillery garden; dd Sergeants' garden; ee Officers' garden; ff Victuallers' garden; g Victuallers' lodging; h Officers' lodging; i Commissaries lodging; j Soldier's lodging; k kitchen; l water gate; m Sheep pen; n Stable; o Wharf; p Rolling bridge for the boats.*

hundred and five is the loss, according to their own official returns, which do not name the De Watteviles, who are known to have lost from two hundred to three hundred, at least. The loss, on our side, was, certainly, not over fifty, in killed and wounded.

The following is the "Secret General Order of Lieutenant-general Drummond," issued on the eve of the battle:

"SECRET GENERAL ORDER OF LT GENL DRUM-  
"MOND.

"HEAD QUARTERS, CAMP BEFORE FORT ERIE.  
"Aug 14, 1814.

"Order of Attack.

'RIGHT COLUMN. *Lieutenant-colonel Fischer,*  
"to attack the left of the enemy's po-  
"sition. Eighth, or King's Regi-  
"ment; Detachment of DeWatte-

"ville's; Light Companies of the  
"Eighty-ninth and One hundredth  
"Regiments;\* Detachments of Royal  
"Artillery, with Rockets; Captain  
"Eustace's Picquet of Cavalry;  
"Captain Powell, Deputy Assistant-  
"quartermaster-general.  
"CENTER COLUMN. *Lieutenant-colonel Drum-*  
"mond. Flank Companies of the  
"Forty-first and One hundred and  
"fourth Regiments; Detachment  
"of fifty Royal Marines; ditto of  
"ninety Seamen; ditto of Royal  
"Artillery. Captain Barney, Eighty-  
"ninth Regiment, † will guide this  
"column, which is to attack the Fort.

\* About eleven hundred men.  
† Say about seven hundred men.

“LEFT COLUMN. Colonel Scott. One hundred and third Regiment; Captain Elliott, Deputy quarter-master-general, will conduct this column, which will attack the right of the enemy’s position, towards the lake, and endeavor to penetrate by the openings, using the short ladders, at the same time, to pass the intrenchment, which is reported to be defended only by the enemy’s Ninth Regiment, two hundred and fifty strong.

“The Infantry Picquets, on Buck’s Road, will be pushed on, with the Indians, and attack the enemy’s picquets, on that road. Lieutenant W. Nicholl, Quarter-master-general of Militia, will conduct this column.

“The rest of the troops, viz., the First Battalion Royals; the remainder of the De Watteville’s; the Glengary Light Infantry; and Incorporated Militia, will remain in reserve, under Lieutenant-colonel Tucker, and are to be posted on the ground at present occupied by our picquets and covering-parties.

“The Squadron of Nineteenth Light Dragoons will be stationed in the ravine, in rear of the battery nearest the advance, ready to receive charge of prisoners and conduct them to the rear.

“The Lieutenant-general will station himself at or near the battery; where Reports are to be made to him.

“Lieutenant-colonel Fischer, commanding the right column, will follow the instructions which he has received; copies of which are communicated to Colonel Scott and Lieutenant-colonel Drummond, for their guidance.

“The Lieutenant-general most strongly recommends a free use of the bayonet. The enemy’s force does not exceed fifteen hundred men, fit for duty; and these are represented as much dispirited.

“The grounds on which the columns of attack are to be formed, will be pointed out, and the orders for their advance given, by the Lieutenant-general commanding.

“Parole, Steele. Countersign, Twenty.

“J. HARVEY. D. A. General.”

The British General speaks disparagingly of our little force, and evidently contemplated an easy victory, at the point of the bayonet; but his tone was wonderfully changed, when he afterwards comes to sum up the materials for his

Official Despatch. The fifteen hundred dispirited soldiers, not more than half of them having been really engaged, had repelled, with immense loss, all the columns of attack; and, though they were doubtless indebted, in no small degree, to their entrenchments, for this result, these very entrenchments were the creation of the army who defended them; having sprung into existence, within the last fortnight, in the face and under the fires of the same enemy by whom they were now attacked.

In the same ratio in which this result was mortifying to them, it was gratifying and encouraging to us. The troops, who had really been somewhat dispirited, were immediately restored to cheerfulness and confidence; nor were these feelings again subdued, during all the labors and privations of the subsequent siege.

The sensation produced in the neighboring Counties, on our side of the line, was no less remarkable. The inhabitants had been disheartened, as well as ourselves, by the defensive attitude to which we had been reduced. As far as our cannon were heard, even upon the Ohio lake-shore, the most excited apprehensions were felt for our safety; and the reaction among them, after the result of this battle was fully known, was equally interesting, in itself, as it was fruitful in kind offices for our personal comfort and relief. In a very short time, they began to venture over, in boats, from Buffalo; and, thus familiarized, an intercourse was afterwards kept up, which enabled us to obtain occasional supplies of fresh provisions, of which we were greatly in need.\*

The losses of the enemy, in this assault, were so severe, that we were permitted to enjoy a few days of comparative rest from the fires of his artillery; and the interval was diligently improved by us, after repairing the bastion, in completing the residue of the defences, along the line of our intrenchment. The attack had made us aware of our weak points; and we lost no time in improving our experience. All unnecessary openings were closed; the abattis renewed; the intrenchments generally strengthened, at every exposed point; new defences were projected around Fort Erie; and ground broken, with a view to complete the unfinished batteries, in rear.

The enemy, during this time, were not idle—although they did not fire much upon us, they

‡ About seven hundred and fifty men.

\* Our usual meals consisted of salt pork, raw, and salt pork, fried, served up on barrel-heads and staves, with biscuit and stale bread. The “varieties” of our camp

bill of fare were salt butter, at four to six shillings per pound; heavy sour bread, at three shillings; perhaps some onions and potatoes, at two or three dollars per bushel; meagre wine, concocted of logwood and vinegar, with an infusion of gall nuts; and cookery as we could catch it.

were evidently engaged, under cover of the woods, in extending and throwing forward their intrenchments, to the right of their first battery; and, on the morning of the nineteenth, they unmasked their battery, No. 2, more elevated, and nearer, by two or three hundred yards, than the first. It was armed with four heavy guns and an eight-inch howitzer. Its fires were chiefly directed against our working parties, on the new bastions of Fort Erie; while the guns of the first battery and two heavy mortars, now for the first time opened upon us, were used for the annoyance of the camp, generally. By the twenty-first, the cannonade from these two batteries was in full play, with a vivacity far exceeding anything we had before experienced, not only in the number of the guns, but in the activity with which they were served.

It will, perhaps, meet the interest of this occasion, at least, of the unmilitary portion of my hearers, to state a little more particularly the nature of these annoyances and the kinds of missiles which, at this time and for many weeks afterwards, were thrown among us, at the rate of one or two hundred—sometimes four or five hundred—per diem.

The chief firing was, of course, from heavy cannon, of the calibres of twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four pounders, loaded with ordinary round-shot. Nine pieces of these were in play, from the two batteries mentioned, and four added, afterwards. The shot were fired direct and in ricochet, reaching almost every part of the camp, so that the most retired and secluded places scarcely afforded protection to the troops in guard-mounting and other parades.

A column, or a guard of no more than two or three files, sometimes a *single person*, on horseback, in certain parts of the camp, drew one or more shots from the British batteries. The smallest gleam of light, in a dark night, produced the same effect; so that it became necessary to prohibit, in Orders, all lights, after dark. I had just crept, one evening, under an old tent that leaned against the ruins of a stone house, in rear of my gun, when Colonel Aspinwall, of the Ninth Regiment, came softly to me, and roused me with the agreeable intelligence that he had brought a letter for me. I had a dark lantern burning under the gun, to which I hastened; and, having opened it but a straw's width, I broke the seal and passed my letter, backwards and forwards, before the dim light, to catch the signature and the nature of its contents. The night, however, was somewhat misty, and the single gleam of light which faintly illuminated a small portion of the damp and ruined stone wall, did not pass unnoticed. I had barely stretched myself out

again to rest, when an eighteen-pound shot came rushing past the gun I had just quitted, and tore directly through the wall under which I was lying. In a very short time the more exposed parts of the camp were thus completely ploughed up. Many of the tents were pierced with shot-holes; and some of them, on the right—my own among the number—were literally shot to rags. Scarcely a day passed without some hair-breadth escapes, and other like memorabilia, more or less wonderful. It was said that one of our officers being thirsty, in the night, raised himself up to reach a pitcher of water; and when in that position, a shot passed through his tent and carried away his pillow.

One day, about dinner-time, at Headquarters, while Colonels McRea and Wood and other officers were seated around the mess-table, great tumult and confusion were heard in the next apartment, which was used as the kitchen, followed by a ripping and tearing of the timbers, nearly under their feet; and, upon inquiry, it appears that a round-shot had passed through the back of the chimney-place, killed one of the cooks, and somewhat disordered the cooking utensils. The line of direction would have carried it precisely upon Colonel Wood, but these various obstacles served to glance the ball towards the lower edge of the partition, where it entered the floor, and, cutting through a few timbers, dropped into the cellar. Upon one occasion, a twenty-four pound shot came tearing along so close that I felt its unwelcome breath. It passed by and shivered to pieces a heavy cedar picket, which stood a few feet off; picking up some of the fragments, I threw them into my sleeping quarters. Upon opening my baggage, at West Point, some time after, I found that they had been wrapped up by my soldier-servant, in the fragments of my old tent; and, on handing them over to the joiner, he contrived to make me a very serviceable chess-board, using the cedar for the dark squares. Observing a group, one day, gathered round a wounded man, I presently joined it. A round-shot had carried away part of his left side. Life was ebbing surely away; but, as is usual, in such cases, the wound was attended with little pain. He was dictating, with great calmness and emphasis, a few words for his absent friends—"Tell them," he repeated, at intervals, "Tell them that I died like a brave man, doing my duty in defence of my country." While in the act of repeating this charge, he expired. Some of the occurrences were of a less serious character. A subaltern of the Eleventh, a good humored Hibernian, on returning to his tent, after being

on fatigue, all day, found that a shot had passed through the tent and cut off the skirts of his uniform coat. He immediately seized the remaining part, by the collar, and brought it out to show his brother officers what a narrow escape he had had, as he had been "on the point," he said, "of putting on that same coat, in the morning!"\*

Another of our annoyances was from the bomb-shells. These could be avoided without much difficulty, if one had time to attend to them; but as this could not always be done, they were, sometimes, particularly in the working-parties, very destructive. Colonel McRea, with Major Trimble, was one day inspecting my work, at the new bastion, when a discharge was observed at the British mortar-battery, and an officer in company remarked that the shell was falling precisely in the bastion where we were. We eluded it, however, though with some difficulty, by retreating to the further side of a row of heavy palisades.

It was by a missile of this kind that, on the eighth or ninth of September, General Gaines, with some Staff-officers, in the house occupied as Head-quarters, was severely wounded. I happened to be on the rampart of the new bastion, at the time, and traced the flight of the shell, as it passed over my head, until it descended through the roof of the building. The General was writing, at the time. It passed down, near his right hand, into the cellar and instantly exploded.

Another kind of missile was called the shrapnel shell—so called from its inventor, Colonel Shrapnel of the British Army. It is a thinner cast-iron shell than the bomb-shell, and is filled with bullets, etc., etc.; and the interstices are filled up with gunpowder. It is projected, like a round-shot, from a piece of ordnance called a howitzer. The contents are

often exceedingly destructive. When the shell explodes, they sometimes scatter in every direction: sometimes they are thrown together, in one mass. I have seen the bullets of one of these shrapnel-shells strike the side of a firmly imbedded rock, and, breaking into minute fragments, fall to the ground, in a shower of silver flakes.

Finally the congreve rocket, which, however, served only to frighten a few horses and set fire to a tent or two, although our enemy seemed to set a high value upon its destructive powers. For it happened, one day, at the same time that a number of British Dragoons were seen riding to a distant part of the shore, to water their horses, an Artillery-officer came down to my battery, to experiment with some of these rockets, of his own manufacture. But, though they scarcely reached half the distance, no sooner did the Dragoons hear the rush of the rocket than they turned their horses' heads, and scampered off, out of reach of all missiles.

Such were some of the modes of warfare with which we had to contend; and such a few of the occurrences among us, from the twentieth of August to the seventeenth of September.\* But it is amazing to see how soon men may be familiarized, even to such forms of imminent danger. After the first week, although fifteen or twenty men were frequently carried off in a day, from the fatigue-party, in the bastion, the works went on, without any visible interruption, and with no dread of danger, in comparison with that of the incessant severe labor. The soldier-boys of the camp were seen constantly running races with spent balls and throwing stones at a bomb-shell, just ready to explode, in much the same spirit as we see them, sometimes, stoning a hornet's-nest.

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\* I remember having heard the lecturer relate another anecdote of this same individual.

It seems he was famous for telling wonderful stories of what he had heard and seen, and was particularly fond of magnifying the things of the "old country," above anything which could be found in the "new." One of his military friends took a convenient opportunity to tell him that he would lose all character for truth, and nobody would believe him if he continued this habit, much longer; and the bargain was made between them that, whenever "Jem" was on the point of committing himself to a rash assertion, the friend should pinch him, or hit him, or touch his foot, to put him on his guard.

It happened, soon after, that the conversation at the mess-table turned upon the subject of barns. "Umph!" said Jemmy, "the barns in this country are nothing to the barns in Ireland! nothin' at all! I knew onst of a barn

"on an estate in our neighborhood." Here his friend touched his foot, and Jemmy closed his mouth. "Why, Jemmy, what was that? tell us about it," called out half a dozen voices. "How large was it?" "How large! did you say?" replied Jemmy, forgetting the admonition. "How large! Why, it must have been six thousand foot long, and upwards." A roar of laughter ensued, during which the friend contrived to grind his toe with great emphasis. As Jemmy started back, some one called out to know how wide that barn was. "How wide!" pitiously answered Jemmy, who was inspecting his bruised member, "Oh, dear! it was six foot." Hereupon the laughter was very loud and long; and Jemmy, losing patience, turned wrathfully upon his considerate friend—"See there, now—ye've made me a greater fool than ever, for 'if ye had't trod so hard on my toe, I'd have squared the barn."—Rev. Malcolm Douglass, D. D.

The British, in the mean time, were extending their works also in the woods, further round to their right; and, early in the month of September, we had reason to believe they were preparing a *third* battery for us, on the salient of the new bastion. With a view to retard this work as much as possible, their position was reconnoitered and a lantern hung in the edge of the woods to give the direction to our gunners. A vast number of shot were thrown; but the battery was nevertheless unmasked, and opened upon us, at the distance of five hundred yards, early in September. †

The completion of our bastions, now elevated fourteen or fifteen feet above the esplanade, in the face of these accumulated fires, became a work of great difficulty and exposure. Much of it had to be done in the night; and it took, therefore, nearly two weeks in September to do what could, otherwise, have been done in five or six days. It was finally completed, and the guns mounted, ready for action, on the fifteenth.

While the strife was thus going on, on the part of the Artillery and Engineers, the Infantry, in addition to their extreme fatigue-duties, were almost daily engaged in skirmishing-parties with the picket-guards and parties of the enemy. In these affairs, we almost always gave the lead; for such was the general desire to draw the enemy into battle, that officers and men were always ready to volunteer for such

enterprises. We had now been many weeks exposed to a galling cannonade, and had become heartily tired of the annoyances and inconveniences of this condition. We knew they had recently received reinforcements; our defences were very complete; and, by the middle of September, no hope was more ardently cherished than that they would come and attack us again. Many a morning, from two o'clock till day light, have I stood on my battery—a dozen other officers sometimes dropping in—to watch the position of the picket-guard, in the hope to catch the first flash of a musket. But it came not; and the conclusion was, at length, generally adopted that *we* must be the attacking party, if we fought at all.

After the wound of General Gaines, the command, of course, devolved upon General Ripley; but General Brown having now partially recovered from his wounds received at Niagara Falls, returned to camp, about the eleventh, and resumed the command. It was now understood, also, that large bodies of Volunteers were collected at Buffalo, about to join us; and soon, without any one having noticed the passage of boats, during the day-time, it was observed that a considerable camp of Volunteers was formed, on the lake-shore, above Towson's - battery. Some reinforcements of Regular troops also came in, from time to time. Every thing pointed towards an approaching *coup-de-main*; but when, and in what manner,

\* \* Amongst some detached papers in the original manuscript, I find the following note: "Meantime, however, our works went steadily on. The intrenchments, wherever they had not been previously finished, were formed up and arranged, in the best possible manner for defence. On many parts of the line, where there was any exposure to attack, pikes of a rude construction were prepared, by fitting rejected bayonets on poles of sufficient length to reach over the parapet, to be used against the enemy, in case he attempted to scale. The line of abatis was, at the same time, completed around the entire work, and, at all exposed points, was rendered more impenetrable than ever. One night, a deserter from the enemy became somehow entangled in it and remained several hours without the power to extricate himself; and when, after calling piteously for release, he was, at last, taken out, with the assistance of some of our men, his clothes were, for the most part, triumphantly retained by the relentless thorns and briars of the abatis. Our ability to repel attack became every day more and more apparent; but the enemy, unfortunately, gave us no further opportunity of testing it. He seemed to have had enough of personal encounter, and aimed only to cripple us or tire us out, by the fires of his artillery."

† "The soldiers now, since the assault, work with alacrity, and the works are making astonishing progress. De-

sertions have indeed taken place, but comparatively very few, and for a few days past, none. They, on the other hand, are flocking over to us, in great numbers; no less than eleven have come in this day, among whom is one Royal Scot, a most remarkable circumstance. The information they bring is rather amusing. They say they had finished a new battery in the woods, and got it in readiness to open (this we knew). But when they came to cut away the bushes and trees, they found *it would not work*; and they were obliged to commence building in a different situation. This I must acknowledge is going upon true *a-posteriori* principles; but, at the same time, I should hardly suppose an officer of the Royal Engineers would adopt this mode of proceeding, so far as to build his battery first, and then try if it would answer his purpose.\* I should hardly do worse, myself. I had almost forgotten to tell you, that General Brown, by some masterly manœuvre, had intercepted the British mail, and made himself master of some interesting documents. Among the rest, is an official return of their loss in the late action, by which they acknowledge nine hundred and five, killed, wounded, and missing, without naming the De Watteville's, whose loss is supposed to be two or three hundred, at least."—Letter from Major D. B. Douglass, September 9th, 1814.

\* A similar error was committed before Sebastopol.

was reserved to the secret councils of the Commander-in-chief, to which, in this case, few besides the Field-officers of Engineers were admitted. On the seventeenth of September, however, it was developed in the Order for the sortie. Of which I am now to speak more briefly than I could wish.

[The author was in the habit of continuing and closing his Lecture, from this point, with a series of extempore remarks, in the order of the following notes:

- “ 1st. Plan and success of the Sortie; killed and wounded; Colonel Wood.
- “ 2nd. M'Cree and Wood; General Brown's dispatches.
- “ 3rd. Esprit de Corps, and Loyalty.
- “ 4th. One more application; Life a warfare—A militant or disciplinary State—Like that of a camp of instruction, having for its end the formation of a character—That character in a vastly higher relation indeed may be said to be, Love of Rectitude, Fidelity, Loyalty, Gentleness, Self-devotion, Implicit Obedience.”

It is a source of great regret that these notes were not filled out by the author's own hand. The last two, in particular, were characteristic of the man himself, and the cream of some thirty years varied experience, from the date of this campaign. Those who have heard them, will not fail to remember the remarkable clearness and vigor of the thoughts which were expressed; the strong convictions of manly duty which they carried to the heart of every hearer; the high tone of Christian chivalry which dignified every sentence, and proved the speaker to have been, as an eloquent friend remarked, “the soldier of CHRIST as well as of his country.”

For the remainder of this Lecture, the Editor must profess himself responsible. He has aimed, simply, to bring it to a proper and satisfactory conclusion; and, in order to preserve the strict integrity of the narrative, has carefully confined himself to well-authenticated facts, with which, however, so far as his recollection extends, the spoken narrative of the author perfectly harmonises.

Colonels Woods and M'Rea, it will be seen, are particularly noticed; for the lecturer was accustomed, not only in these lectures but, often, in the social circle, also, to acknowledge the benefits he derived from the patronage and example of both these distinguished officers. His mention of Colonel Wood, in particular, was marked with undisguised warmth and affectionate feeling. It seemed impossible for him to look back to the young days of an ardent and generous ambition, even through the long period of thirty years, without a pang of sorrow, at the recollection of the high-minded and chivalrous man, who was his friend and brother-in-arms; his companion, amidst scenes of the most soul-stirring interest; his tutor in Military Science; his mentor in the perplexities of an early and important responsibility; his guide and example, in all

that was high, noble, and disinterested, in the walk and profession of a soldier.—*Rev. Malcolm Douglass, D.D.*]

It will be observed that the British batteries of which mention has been already made, were quite distinct from the British camp. The camp proper was situated, some two miles to the rear of its batteries, upon a cleared space, not far from the Niagara river, but screened by heavy forests from the risk of annoyance from the American side. For the management and protection of the batteries, however, the Infantry of the British force had been divided into three Brigades, which were appointed, alternately, to guard them against surprise. They were thus kept constantly defended by a force of from twelve to fifteen hundred men; and were strengthened, besides, along their whole line, by a complexity of defences, in front and in rear, consisting of other intrenchments, lines of brushwood, felled timber, and abattis, arranged with studied intricacy and expressly calculated to retard and confuse an assailing party. The object of the sortie, as General Brown concisely observes, was “to storm these batteries, destroy their cannon, and roughly handle the Brigade upon duty, before those in reserve (at the British camp) could be brought into action.”\*

The plan of the sortie was arranged with reference to such aids and facilities as the character of the ground afforded, in order that the attack might, so far as was practicable, have the effect of a surprise. The forest which bordered upon the extreme left of our camp extended around and far beyond the enemy's batteries; and, about half way between the nearest battery and the salient point of our bastion, the upper plateau of the river was intersected by a slight ravine, which opened, indeed, in full view of the enemy, but which headed from the woods, and might, therefore, be gained, it was thought, without attracting his observation. Accordingly, on the sixteenth, fatigue-parties were sent, under the charge of able officers, to mark a road through the swampy and timbered ground; in doing which they proceeded with so much caution, that they passed the extreme right of the enemy's line, and turned upon the rear of his batteries, without discovery.

On the morning of the seventeenth, every thing appeared favorable for the meditated enterprise. The atmosphere was heavily loaded

\* For these and other items, see General Brown's Report to the Secretary of War, dated “Fort Erie, Sept. 29, 1814;” also General Porter's Report to the Commanding General, dated “Fort Erie, Sept. 22. 1814;” also the

map of the British Batteries and their defences, as sketched by D. B. Douglass, in September and October of 1814; also original letters of D. B. Douglass, dated in September and October of 1814.

with vapors, with, now and then, a slight shower, all which was well calculated to screen our movements and to cherish our enemy's sense of security. The attack was organized to be made principally at two points. The left column, in three divisions, under General Porter, passed through the woods by the circuitous route marked out, on the preceding day, until they were within a few rods of the British right flank. The right column, commanded by General Miller, was, in the mean time, passed by small detachments, into the edge of the woods, under cover of which it marched to the head of the ravine, and, passing quietly down, took up its position nearly opposite the enemy's center. General Ripley was stationed by Fort Erie, with a column in reserve; and the artillery was put in readiness to cover the return of the troops.

About half past two in the afternoon, the action commenced with the assault of the right of the enemy's works, by our left column. The right column, under General Miller, immediately charged from the ravine; pierced the enemy's intrenchments; and succeeded in co-operating with General Porter's column. In a few minutes, they had taken possession of the block-houses; cleared the intrenchments of their defenders; captured the second and third batteries; and disabled their cannon. The British first battery held out for a short time, but was finally abandoned, when its guns also were disabled or otherwise destroyed. The whole of the enemy's reserve was, by this time, in full march for the scene of action; but the object of the sortie had been fully accomplished; and our troops retired, in good order and without molestation, to the fort.

Our losses in this affair were considerable, and were increased perhaps by the same causes—viz., the mist and rain—which had favored the attack. As, for instance, owing to the obscurity of the sun, detached parties, unacquainted with the country, moved off, at the signal for retiring, in the wrong direction, and met the enemy's approaching columns. It was in this way that we nearly lost the gallant General Miller, who was separated from his command, and, meeting the enemy's advance, saved himself only by a very speedy retreat. In this way, also, a body of fifty prisoners, who had surrendered, and were ordered to the fort, under the charge of a subaltern and fourteen volunteers, were conducted towards the British camp and re-captured, with nearly the whole of their escort. These, with other instances of the same sort, together with the loss which necessarily accompanied the bold attack upon the batteries and breast-works, reduced our effective force upwards of five hundred men, including some highly valued officers. But unfortunate as was the battle, in this respect, it was, in itself, a most glorious achievement, and very decisive for us, in the result. In one hour of close action, our two thousand Regulars and Militia destroyed the fruits of fifty days' labor, and reduced the strength of the enemy, as we were informed by their own General Order, one thousand men, at the least; and gave them such an idea of Yankee courage or, as they termed it, desperation, that they broke up their encampment, on the night of the twenty first, and retired rapidly down the river.\*

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\* See General Brown's Report of the Sortie; D. B. Douglass's correspondence; etc., etc.

## Notes on This Issue

Dr. John T. Horton's introduction to the lectures of Capt. David B. Douglass, which we reprint in this issue, is but one of many contributions stemming from his deep and productive interest in the history of the Niagara Frontier. His volume, *Old Erie: The History of an American Community*, is one of the finest county histories published in this country. As one of the organizers in 1955 of the Congress of Local Historical Societies, which has been held annually since then under the joint auspices of the Buffalo & Erie

County Historical Society and the State University, he has pioneered in an impressive example of cooperation between a local historical society and a local university. Dr. Horton has been Chairman of the Department of History (formerly the Department of History and Government) of the State University of New York at Buffalo since 1948. His classic study, *James Kent: A Study in Conservatism*, was awarded the Albert J. Beveridge Prize of the American Historical Association in 1939.

and it was quite dark. Indeed, we had, at no time, after my return from camp, light enough to see the face of our enemy; but it was very evident, from his fires, that he was vastly more numerous than had been represented to us, by Mrs. Wilson; and this we shall be able to account for, presently, by the exhibition of his own Official Report. For the present, it was sufficient for us, that, whatever his numbers were, we had gained possession of his ground; and, although there was no reason to suppose that we should long enjoy it, without opposition, the successful issue of the battle, thus far, gave great animation and confidence to the troops; and enabled them to prepare, with coolness and determination, for the terrible conflict that awaited them.

They were yet but imperfectly formed, on their new ground, when the enemy re-appeared, in great force, as the assailant; and, after a few sharp volleys, given and received, the two lines closed in a desperate conflict with the bayonet.

The bayonet, you can well conceive, is a potent weapon, on the side of high discipline and strong nerves, and, especially, when united with the characteristic determination of the British soldier. The charge of bayonet is not often used, except as a last resort; and then seldom goes beyond the mere crossing of the weapons—one or the other party then breaks or retires. But it was not so, in this instance. It was maintained, on both sides, with an obstinacy of which the history of war furnishes few examples; and, finally, resulted in the second repulse of the enemy. A succession of similar charges—sometimes repelled by counter attacks, upon the flanks of the assailing party, and sometimes by the fire of musketry, in front, in volleys perfectly deafening—were continued, in rapid succession, for nearly an hour, with the same result; until the enemy, having suffered very severely, and wearied with the obstinacy of the combat and hopeless of success, abstained from further attacks, and left us in undisputed possession of the field.

In the meantime, in consequence of wounds received by General Brown and General Scott, the command had devolved upon General Ripley, who, after the termination of the battle, retained quiet possession of the field, for about an hour; and then retired, without the slightest molestation, to the encampment. In one particular only was this movement to be regretted. We had not brought off the captured artillery; and, upon this ground alone, can our antagonist, with any plausibility, dispute with us the palm of this victory.

About the time of the enemy's second attempt to dispossess us of our position, I had been di-

rected to return to camp and prepare my command for action, in case they should be required on the following day. Before leaving the height, I rode around, for the second or third time, among those pieces, to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing and handling them. They were eight in number—brass guns, of the most beautiful model, of different calibres, from six to twenty-four pounders. Not the slightest apprehension came over my mind that I should not, on the following morning, see them all drawn up, on the Camp Parade, at Chippewa; and, even with this assurance, I parted from them not without some reluctance. What, then, think ye, was the bitterness of my disappointment and regret, when I found, on the morning of the twenty-sixth, that the guns had been *left on the field*. Such, however, was the fact. In the absorbing interest of the strife, no one seems to have thought of providing means for getting off or destroying this artillery; and the omission was unfortunately not discovered until it became too late to remedy it.

Irrespective of this circumstance, however, the immediate issue of the battle was in the highest degree honorable and glorious to the American arms. It had been sustained by about five hours hard fighting, and against what disparity let us now examine by a reference to the British official account. It appears that, almost at the moment of commencing the action, General Riall, whose force may have been previously not far from that stated by Mrs. Wilson, had been joined by Lieutenant-general Drummond, with an addition of about one thousand veteran troops, making, with Riall's force, an aggregate of one thousand, eight hundred Regulars, besides three or four hundred Militia and Indians, which are known to have been in this part of the battle; and this was the state of the field, on the British side, from the beginning of the battle until about nine o'clock. On our side, during the same time, it was contested by General Scott's Brigade only, with a small detachment of Artillery, amounting in all to about eight hundred and fifty, say nine hundred, effective men. About nine o'clock, both armies were simultaneously reinforced—ours, by the Brigade of General Ripley, a part of Porter's Volunteers, and some Artillery, in all about thirteen hundred men; that of the enemy by the One hundred and third and One hundred and fourth Regiments, with the balance of the Royal Scots, amounting, by the statement of General Drummond, to about fourteen hundred Regulars, in all—and, as near as can be estimated, the state of the field, including the killed and wounded of the previous fighting, was then a little less than four thousand, on the part of the British, against, at the utmost, not more than



The Smithsonian Institution  
The Star-Spangled Banner in its new location in the Smithsonian Institution.

# The Commemoration of the Sesquicentennial of the Writing of "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the War of 1812.

THE commemoration of the 150 years which have followed the War of 1812 is significant during a period of recurrent border troubles around the world. Since the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817 for mutual disarmament of the Great Lakes there has been no major dispute along the 3,000 mile Canadian-American border. During more than a century when heavily fortified borders became the established practice, no fortifications were placed on this border, despite occasions of disagreement between the United States and Canada or Britain.

To commemorate this historically significant fact, the State of New York has created the War of 1812 Commission with Mrs. Chester B. Pond of South Bethlehem, New York as the chairman, Senator Earl W. Brydges of Niagara Falls, New York as vice chairman, and Hugh M. Flick, Associate Commissioner of Education, as secretary. Also appointed to the committee: Major General Almerin C. O'Hara, Loudonville, Dr. Harold G. Wilm, Loudonville, Dr. James E. Allen Jr., Loudonville, Emmet N. O'Brien, Delmar, Brigadier General Owen B. Augspurger, Buffalo, Herman H. Schwartz, Rochester, Paul P. Cohen, Buffalo, Dr. Foster S. Brown, Canton, Clinton W. Marsh, Watertown, Loren A. Schoff, Lowville, Robert C. Schutt, Grand Island, Richard C. Dewey, Tonawanda, Clarence O. Lewis, Lockport, Mrs. Dom (Margaret) Laurie, Lewiston, Mortimer Feuer, New York, Samuel J. Nachwalter, New York, Mrs. Robert W. Smith, Rochester, Mr. Richard T. Gilmartin, East Hampton, Dr. Marvin A. Rapp, Garden City, Mr. Robert West Howard, Rochester, Mrs. Mildred F. Taylor, Lyons, Mrs. Laura Y. Finehout, Fultonville.

Also being commemorated by this same State Commission is the 150th anniversary of the writing of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Francis Scott Key was on board the sloop *Minden* during the bombardment of the American Fort McHenry that guarded the approach to Bal-

timore on the day and night of September 13, 1814. Key had appeared before the British admiral seeking the release of Dr. William Beanes and was not allowed to return until after the battle. As day broke, Key saw the American flag still flying over Fort McHenry. Based on notes, he later wrote our national anthem.

Preserved for many years in the Smithsonian Institution, this banner was not adequately exhibited until 1964. Space has been provided in the newly opened Exhibits Building in Washington, D. C.; the flag as now displayed there is shown on the opposite page. Though the original manuscript of the anthem was lost by the printer, another draft was written shortly thereafter by Francis Scott Key.

The commemoration of the War of 1812 began on the Niagara Frontier with a luncheon in Buffalo on June 5, 1962 for the members of the Toronto and Buffalo City Councils, the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society and the Toronto Historical Board. In 1963 a luncheon for the organizations and officials was held in Toronto on April 27. Following the luncheon a plaque commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Battle of York and those who died there was dedicated.

On July 10, 1964 an exhibit, "The Military Heritage of the Niagara Frontier," was previewed by both organizations at the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society. On July 26, 1964 an international ceremony was held with a guard mount by the Lincoln and Welland Regiment and the 44th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery at Fort George, Ontario, and a review of a battalion of the 27th Armored Division at Old Fort Niagara, New York.

These events have marked a fitting observance of a period of international cooperation—an example of friendship and reciprocal relations which are of worldwide and timeless significance.

twenty-five hundred, on our side; and such it continued to be, through all the subsequent strife, to the end of the battle.

Again; as to the character of the troops and the nature of the position occupied by them. Three of the British Regiments had been detailed from the Peninsular Army; and the others were, probably, not surpassed, in discipline, by any troops of the British service. Being previously on the ground, they were enabled to select their own position, and secure to themselves every local advantage; and it was in the position thus chosen and occupied, that we attacked them. Yet, under all these circumstances—superiority of numbers and position, veteran service, experience, discipline, and *esprit de corps*—his left wing was driven back, with great loss, at the first onset; his right wing only for a time saved from the same fate, by the commanding influence of his battery and the strong position of his light troops, in the woods. Finally, in the second stage of the battle, his battery, the key of his position, was stormed and taken; his whole re-inforced line driven back; his own position occupied and held by us, in spite of the most determined efforts to retake it; and still held in undisputed possession, for nearly two hours, after those efforts had ceased. Will any one say that this was not a victory?

\* The following correspondence will not be without interest in this connection. It is referred to, in a marginal note of the lecturer, and is well authenticated:

“HEAD QUARTERS BUFFALO,  
“July 29, 1815.

“TO BRIG’R GEN PORTER &  
“BRIG’R GEN MILLER,  
“GENTLEMEN:

“Not a doubt existing on my  
“mind that the Enemy were defeated and driven from  
“the field of battle, on the 25th July last, near the Falls  
“of Niagara, leaving us in peaceable possession of all his  
“Artillery, I have, on all occasions, so stated.

“Learning that some diversity of opinion has appeared  
“upon this subject, so interesting to the Army, I have to  
“request of you, Gentlemen, to state your views regarding  
“it. You remained on the Field after I had left it, and  
“know if the Enemy did or did not appear when our  
“Army marched off, or if a gun was fired, for a consider-  
“able time before the Army moved, upon its taking up  
“the line of March, or on its way to Camp.

“I do not enquire of you who were the heroes of the  
“day, or which of the Corps particularly distinguished  
“themselves. But I call upon you to vindicate the fair  
“and honest fame of the Army which has done so much  
“to exalt our National character. Do not permit its rep-  
“utation to be tarnished by the faults or follies of its  
“Commanders. The victory was achieved by Americans  
“over the best troops of Britain; and the fact being es-  
“tablished is all that concerns the honor of the country or  
“the glory of her arms.

“Very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
“JAC. BROWN.”

In the darkness of the night, it is true, we lost sight of the captured artillery; but that event can, in no degree, affect the historic reality of the enemy’s complete repulse. It is easily accounted for, by the peculiar circumstances under which the battle was fought and the absorbing interest of the fight. The guns would have been a gratifying evidence of the result; but they are not the only evidence. The facts, as I have stated them, are corroborated by abundant testimony; and the absence of these trophies no more invalidates such testimony, than the absence of an incidental memorandum would impair the validity of a contract or a title similarly avouched.\*

“BUFFALO, 29th July, 1815.

“SIR:

“In answer to your letter of this date, we have no  
“hesitation in saying that, in our opinion, the character of  
“every incident attending the battle of Niagara Falls,  
“and particularly the mode of its termination, exhibits  
“clear and unequivocal evidence that it resulted in a de-  
“cided victory on the part of the American Army.

“We found the enemy in possession of a commanding  
“eminence, in the centre of open and extensive fields,  
“without any woods, ravines, or other cover sufficiently  
“near to favour an attack, and supported by a Battery of  
“9 pieces of field ordnance. From this position they  
“were driven at the point of the Bayonet, with the loss  
“of all his Artillery. After our Army had possessed itself  
“of their position and Artillery, the Enemy received rein-  
“forcements, and made not less than three deliberate,  
“well-arranged, and desperate charges to regain them; in  
“each of which he was driven back in confusion, with the  
“loss of many prisoners; but the darkness of the night  
“and the surrounding woods did not permit our Army to  
“avail itself, as it might, under other circumstances, of  
“these repeated successes. The Battle commenced a  
“little before sunset and terminated a little before or  
“near eleven o’clock. After the Enemy appeared, the last  
“time, they exhibited evidences of great confusion by  
“distant scattering firing in the woods; and our Troops  
“were drawn up, in great order, on the field of Battle,  
“forming three sides of a hollow square, with the whole  
“of our own and the Enemy’s Artillery in the centre.

“In this situation we remained for more than an hour,  
“and in our opinion the Troops were in a condition to act  
“with more decisive effect than at any former period of  
“the contest. During this interval, we do not recollect to  
“have heard a gun, or seen any other indication of the  
“Enemy being near us; and at the close of it the Army  
“retired slowly to camp, without any molestation by, or  
“the appearance of, a foe. We left on the field the En-  
“emy’s Artillery and other trophies of Victory, which  
“were, at the time of our leaving it, and had been for a  
“long time before, in our undisputed possession.

“We are, Sir, very respectfully

“Your obt Servants

“PETER B. PORTER.

“JAMES MILLER.

“To Maj Gen’l BROWN.”

# Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society

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